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MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Needs to Take Further Actions to Prevent Sexual Assault during Initial Military Training

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Why GAO Did This Study

In September 2012, following investigations for alleged sexual assaults during basic training, an Air Force Commander-directed report made 46 recommendations intended to better prevent sexual assaults during basic training. Congress mandated that GAO review the Air Force's efforts to implement the recommendations and lessons learned to better prevent and respond to sexual assault incidents among the services.

This report examines the extent to which (1) the Air Force implemented the recommendations to better prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assault during basic training and evaluated the effectiveness of actions taken and (2) the military services have a process to share lessons learned and have data to oversee their efforts to prevent sexual assault and related misconduct during initial military training. GAO analyzed the Commander's report, DOD policies, annual reports on efforts to improve the Air Force's program, and surveys, and met with officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the Air Force establish an oversight framework to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions, the military services formalize CORBT's role and include key stakeholders, and the services develop or leverage existing military training surveys to provide more comprehensive and detailed data. DOD concurred with the first three recommendations but partially concurred with the last, citing a need for more analysis. GAO continues to believe the recommendation is valid as discussed in this report.

View [GAO-14-806](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The Air Force implemented most recommendations from the 2012 Commander's report intended to better prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assaults and related misconduct during the Air Force's basic training for new enlisted personnel, but it has not evaluated the effectiveness of its actions. GAO found that as of July 2014, of the 46 recommendations, the Air Force implemented 39, partially implemented 6, and did not implement 1. The Air Force established a council to provide senior leadership and oversight of actions taken in response to those recommendations. However, the Air Force has not fully established an oversight framework to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the recommendations. Key practices for organizational change call for using a results-oriented framework to enable program oversight and for the framework to include performance goals. Without fully establishing an oversight framework for evaluating the effectiveness of its actions to prevent sexual assault during basic training, the Air Force will not know whether to sustain the efforts it has implemented or undertake different actions.

Most military services share lessons learned through the Council on Recruit Basic Training (CORBT) and collect selected information to oversee their efforts, but do not have comprehensive, detailed data about sexual assault and related misconduct during initial military training, which includes basic and subsequent career training. CORBT was established in 2013 to address a variety of topics to improve basic training. Key practices for interagency collaboration include clearly defining roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in formalized guidance. However, the draft charter for CORBT does not identify the council's role as the forum for discussing sexual assault prevention for the entire range of initial military training. Further, it does not include key stakeholders who are critical to the success of sharing lessons learned on prevention of sexual assault and misconduct, such as the Marine Corps and service representatives responsible for sexual harassment. Without formalizing this role and involving key stakeholders, the Department of Defense (DOD) cannot ensure that the council is the most effective mechanism for sharing lessons learned for better prevention and response to sexual assault during initial military training. Also, three services have taken steps to obtain more comprehensive and detailed data that are specific to initial military training and provide better information about unreported misconduct for oversight, but these efforts vary by service. Further, none of the services have detailed data for both their basic and subsequent training environments. For example, the Air Force has a survey administered during basic training and the Navy has a survey given during subsequent career training. The Army has an annual survey but plans to develop a more comprehensive survey for basic training. The Marine Corps obtains information through leadership meetings with groups of recruits but does not have a formalized survey. Without developing or leveraging existing surveys about sexual assault and misconduct that can occur during initial military training, service officials may not have the comprehensive and detailed data needed to improve their sexual assault and sexual misconduct prevention programs. Further, military training leadership may have difficulty in determining the corrective actions that could best address remaining challenges in preventing sexual assault within initial military training.

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Abbreviations

AFOSI	Air Force Office of Special Investigations
CORBT	Council on Recruit Basic Training
DOD	Department of Defense
SFOI	Security Forces Operations, Investigations

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September 9, 2014

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

According to the Department of Defense (DOD), incidents of sexual assault represent a significant and persistent problem within the department and DOD has considerable interest in better preventing sexual assault and responding to assaults that occur.¹ In DOD's fiscal year 2013 *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military*,² the department reported that 5,061 alleged sexual assaults involving one or more servicemembers as either the alleged victim or the alleged suspect had been reported department-wide during that fiscal year. However, DOD estimates that the majority of sexual assaults within the military still go unreported. Based on the results of a DOD 2012 survey of active duty servicemembers, DOD estimated that about 26,000 active duty

¹According to Department of Defense Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program*, DOD Directive 6495.01 (Jan. 23, 2012) (incorporating change Apr. 30, 2013), sexual assault is defined as intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent. The term includes a broad category of sexual offenses consisting of the following specific Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) offenses: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy, or attempts to commit these acts.

²Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2013* (Apr. 22, 2014). This is the most recent data available from DOD regarding reported allegations of sexual assault.

servicemembers experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact in the year prior to the survey.³

While many sexual assaults may go unreported, numerous sexual assault investigations have received widespread media attention, often because of the rank or position of the accused. Several of these incidents involved sexual assault and other sexual misconduct committed by military training instructors at Air Force basic training.⁴ Since 2011, 34 military training instructors from the Air Force's basic military training program at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, have been investigated for alleged sexual assaults or other sexual misconduct, such as sexual harassment⁵ or

³DOD uses the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members to estimate the past year prevalence of unwanted sexual contact among active duty servicemembers. Although the survey term "unwanted sexual contact" does not appear in the UCMJ, it is used as an umbrella term intended to include certain acts prohibited by the UCMJ, which range from penetrating crimes, such as rape, to nonpenetrating crimes, such as abusive sexual contact. Survey respondents who indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact were then asked to provide details of the one experience that had the greatest effect, including the location of where that situation occurred. The Defense Manpower Data Center has administered the survey on a regular basis since 1995, and the 2012 survey is the most recent data available from DOD regarding unwanted sexual contact. These estimates have a margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level of less than 1 percentage point.

⁴Basic training is the first introduction to the military for each of the services and includes instruction for new recruits on order and discipline, practices and procedures in their specific military services, combat preparedness, as well as instruction to enable new recruits to meet service-specific fitness requirements.

⁵Department of Defense Directive 1350.2, *Department of Defense Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Program*, (Aug. 18, 1995) (incorporating change May 7, 1997), defines sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person's job, pay, or career; is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person; or unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

unprofessional relationships⁶ with trainees. In June 2012, the Air Education and Training Command, responsible for Air Force initial military training,⁷ commissioned a Commander-directed investigation to evaluate the misconduct between instructors and recruits during basic training that occurred from October 2010 through June 2011. This report was to focus on incidences of sexual assault and sexual misconduct that were undetected and unreported for many months and to identify recommendations for corrective actions. The resulting report (the Commander's report) was issued in September 2012, and contained 46 recommendations directed to the commander of the Air Education and Training Command to address weaknesses in the Air Force basic training environment and to better prevent sexual assaults and sexual misconduct.⁸

The issue of sexual assault and misconduct within initial military training is not unique to the Air Force. From a 2012 survey of active duty servicemembers, DOD estimated that of the 6.1 percent of women from across all the military services that reported having experienced unwanted sexual contact, 6 percent reported that the incident occurred during basic training and 19 percent reported that it occurred during subsequent career-specific training.⁹ Of the 1.2 percent of men across the

⁶The UCMJ prohibits fraternization between officer and enlisted personnel, and each military department has regulations prohibiting unprofessional relationships between superiors and their subordinates, such as between instructors and recruits, and could include physical contact or nonphysical contact, such as contact through social media. In August 2013, the Secretary of Defense ordered a review to ensure that current policies prohibiting inappropriate relationships between recruiters and recruits and trainers and trainees are consistent across the military services. The fiscal year 2013 *DOD Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* states that the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy and Readiness reviewed the pertinent policies, and they were found to be similar in most aspects but varied in terminology, level of responsibility, and the specificity with which prohibited actions are identified. In response, DOD plans to draft policy in fiscal year 2014 that addresses the gaps and inconsistencies identified.

⁷"Initial military training" is used by DOD to describe basic training and subsequent career-specific training that occurs after basic training. Subsequent career-specific training is referred to by different names across the service; the Air Force calls it Technical Training; the Army calls it Advanced Individual Training, the Navy calls it A School, and the Marine Corps calls it Military Occupational Specialty training.

⁸Department of the Air Force, *Developing America's Airmen: A Review of Air Force Enlisted Training* (September 2012).

⁹These estimates have a margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level of 6 percentage points or fewer.

services that reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact, 13 percent reported that the incident occurred during basic training and 22 percent reported that it occurred during subsequent career-specific training.¹⁰

We issued multiple reports from 2008 through 2013 that broadly reviewed DOD's sexual assault prevention and response program. For example, in August 2008, we found, among other matters, that (1) DOD's guidance did not adequately address some important issues, such as how to implement the sexual assault prevention and response program when operating in a deployed environment or in joint environments; (2) most, but not all, commanders supported the department's sexual assault prevention programs; (3) required sexual assault prevention and response training was not consistently effective; and (4) factors such as a DOD-reported shortage of mental health care providers affected whether servicemembers who are victims of sexual assault can or do access mental health services. We made nine recommendations to the Secretary of Defense to improve the oversight and implementation of DOD's program, such as to develop an oversight framework that should contain long-term goals, objectives, and milestones in addition to performance goals, strategies to be used to accomplish goals, and criteria for measuring progress; assess commanders' support of the sexual assault prevention program; review and revise guidance and training; review victims' access to mental health care; and evaluate appropriate staffing levels of certain sexual assault response-related positions. DOD concurred with our recommendations.¹¹

Additionally, in February 2010, we reviewed DOD's progress in addressing our 2008 recommendations and found that the department's draft oversight framework lacked key elements needed for comprehensive oversight of DOD's programs, such as criteria for measuring progress and an indication of how it will use the information derived from such measurement to improve its programs. We made recommendations to help ensure that DOD was assessing the development of future programs to improve its overall response to sexual

¹⁰These estimates have a margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level of 16 percentage points or fewer.

¹¹We also made recommendations to the Coast Guard. See GAO, *Military Personnel: DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs Face Implementation and Oversight Challenges*, [GAO-08-924](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 29, 2008).

assault.¹² DOD concurred with these recommendations and has since fully or partially addressed all of these recommended actions from our 2008 and 2010 reports. Further, DOD has actions are under way to address those recommendations we have designated as partially addressed. For example, DOD officials stated that they are currently working to develop performance measures as recommended in 2008 and plans to report the outcomes. For a list of related reports, see the Related GAO Products page at the end of this report.

Congress mandated that we review the status and effectiveness of recommendations the Air Force implemented from the Commander's 2012 report to better prevent sexual assault during its basic military training and assess best practices by the military services for preventing sexual assault during this training.¹³ This report examines the extent to which (1) the Air Force implemented the recommendations in the Commander's 2012 report intended to better prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assault during basic training, and evaluated the effectiveness of any actions taken, and (2) the military services have a process to share lessons learned and have the data to oversee their efforts to prevent sexual assault and misconduct during initial military training.

To examine the extent to which the Air Force implemented the recommendations in the Commander's report and evaluated the effectiveness of any actions taken, we reviewed the 2012 Commander's report and related Air Force documents, including regulations, policy memorandums, and staffing reports. We also conducted interviews with command leadership, senior officials, and military training instructors at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and Randolph Air Force Bases to discuss actions taken by the Air Force to implement the recommendations. Lackland Air Force Base is the only enlisted basic military training facility within the Air Force, and Randolph Air Force Base is the headquarters of the Air Education and Training Command. We also noted physical changes, while at Lackland Air Force Base, that had been

¹²GAO, *Military Personnel: Additional Actions Are Needed to Strengthen DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs*, [GAO-10-215](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2010).

¹³See H. Rep. No. 113-102 (June 7, 2013) accompanying H.R. 1960, a proposed bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014.

made in response to the recommendations in the Commander's report. The Air Force provided its analysis of whether the implementation of each recommendation from the Commander's report was complete as of July 2014. We independently assessed the completeness of implementation for each of the 46 recommendations from the Commander's report. To determine our designation of completeness of implementation, using content analysis, we compared the documents and statements of officials detailing actions taken by the Air Force to the findings and recommendations outlined in the Commander's report. We categorized each of the recommendations as one of the following: (1) "implemented" if our analysis showed that the actions taken by the Air Force in response to the recommendations fully address the findings made in the Commander's report and fully institutionalized those actions into Air Force policies and procedures, (2) "partially implemented" if our analysis showed that additional actions are needed to fully address the finding and resulting recommendation in the Commander's report or if further steps are needed to ensure that the changes are fully institutionalized in Air Force policies and procedures, or (3) "not implemented" if the Air Force did not take identifiable steps to address the recommendation.¹⁴ We reviewed documents such as Air Force-provided reports and briefings and interviewed Air Force officials regarding its efforts to evaluate the impact of corrective actions it has taken. We compared its efforts against key management practices for organizations undergoing change or transformation identified in our prior work, such as involving senior leadership and developing a framework for oversight, including establishing performance goals and measures that would enable it to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions to better prevent and respond to

¹⁴For the purposes of this report, we define institutionalized changes as those that have a clear method for being sustained beyond leadership changes, such as through formalized policy and procedural changes. Our prior work found that organizational change and transformation can take 5 to 7 years. An organizational change such as addressing weaknesses within the Air Force's basic training to better prevent sexual assault may take several years to complete. Institutionalizing changes in policy or procedures may be necessary to sustain those changes beyond leadership turnover, which occurs frequently within the military, such as every 2 years in many positions. See GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, [GAO-03-669](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003). We did not assess whether these recommendations should be implemented, but assessed if the Air Force took actions that addressed the findings and resulting recommendation from the Commander's report.

sexual assault and misconduct.¹⁵ Further, we reviewed our body of work on effective performance measurement and reviewed the Air Force's efforts, if any, to provide oversight and use of performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its sexual assault and sexual misconduct prevention efforts in the basic training environment.¹⁶

To examine the extent to which the military services have a process to share lessons learned and have the data to oversee their efforts to prevent sexual assault and misconduct during initial military training, we reviewed the services' efforts to collaborate and share lessons learned and compared these efforts to best practices for effective collaboration.¹⁷ Further, we reviewed the policies and procedures in place within each service that are intended to prevent sexual assaults during initial military training and discussed any assessment of the impact of these efforts. In addition to Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, we visited three basic training locations to review policies and procedures in place, or in development, to better prevent sexual assault and misconduct. We visited the Army's Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Naval

¹⁵In 2002, we convened a forum of public and private sector senior leaders and academics to identify useful practices and lessons learned from organizational change and transformations, and we subsequently reported the key practices that were consistently identified from successful organizational changes and transformations. These key practices can be modified to fit the circumstances and conditions that are relevant to a particular agency as it transforms its culture to be more results oriented. See [GAO-03-669](#) for the key practices for organizational transformations.

¹⁶We have a body of work that discusses the need for effective performance measurement and details the key attributes of successful performance measures. A seminal report defines the key attributes of successful performance measures that apply to any government program: GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Further Refine Its Tax Filing Season Performance Measures*, [GAO-03-143](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 22, 2002). Other examples of applying performance measure attributes can be found in the following reports: GAO, *Missile Defense: Opportunity to Refocus on Strengthening Acquisition Management*, [GAO-13-432](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2013); *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships*, [GAO-11-646SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2011); and *Defense Health Care Reform: Additional Implementation Details Would Increase Transparency of DOD's Plans and Enhance Accountability*, [GAO-14-49](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 6, 2013).

¹⁷In 2005, we conducted work to identify criteria that can be used to help enhance and sustain collaboration between federal agencies; specifically, we reviewed the relevant literature, including our prior reports, and interviewed experts in the area of collaboration. On the basis of these sources, we identified eight broad practices that can facilitate greater collaboration among federal agencies. See GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

Station Great Lakes, Illinois; and Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina,¹⁸ in order to interview command leadership, sexual assault response coordinators, victim advocates, chaplains, judge advocates, and officials from military criminal investigative organizations. We also held meetings with basic training instructors and recruits to understand from their perspectives how policies and procedures are implemented and any remaining challenges in preventing sexual assault during basic training.¹⁹ We identified sources the department uses to track or monitor sexual assaults or obtain information about sexual misconduct during initial training through DOD's comprehensive instruction on preventing sexual assault and interviews with DOD officials. We reviewed DOD sources of data, such as annual strategic plans, as well as DOD's sexual assault prevention and response directives and instructions that identify roles and responsibilities regarding performance measurement for the department's sexual assault prevention and response program. We interviewed military service officials about service-specific efforts to obtain more comprehensive and detailed information about sexual assault and sexual misconduct that occur during initial military training and obtained service documents related to those efforts,

¹⁸We visited Lackland Air Force Base and Naval Station Great Lakes as these locations are the only enlisted basic training locations in the Air Force and Navy, respectively. We selected Fort Jackson because it is the largest of the four enlisted Army basic training locations and one of the locations that trains both female and male Army recruits. The Marine Corps has two enlisted basic training locations, and we selected Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island because it is the only location that trains both female and male Marine Corps recruits.

¹⁹We relied on command leadership to identify officials such as victim advocates or military training instructors for our interviews, which may result in limitations as we did not meet with all individuals performing these functions. For our interviews with Army, Marine Corps, and Navy recruits, we asked command leadership to select groups of 10 to 15 male recruits and 10 to 15 female recruits, and we met with male and female groups separately. Command leadership in various locations used different methods to select recruits, including selecting recruits based on last digits of Social Security numbers and asking for volunteers for an unknown task or duty. While the results of these interviews are not generalizable, they provided perspectives on basic training. At Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base, we met with a group of 8 recruits that included both male and female recruits who volunteered for an unknown task or duty.

such as surveys.²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, we assessed the reliability of any data from fiscal years 2012 and 2013 used in the development of this report by reviewing related documentation and interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data.²¹

Further details about our scope and methodology can be found in appendix I. We conducted this performance audit from August 2013 to September 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Initial Military Training

Every enlisted military recruit begins his or her career in initial military training, which includes basic training and subsequent job or career-specific training. Basic training is the first introduction to the military for each of the services and includes instruction for new recruits on order and discipline, practices and procedures in their specific military services, and combat preparedness, as well as instruction to enable new recruits to meet service-specific fitness requirements. Each service maintains basic training facilities at select locations across the continental United States (see fig. 1). Basic training is often referred to as basic or boot camp, depending on the service, and the majority of the training and oversight of

²⁰ [GAO-06-15](#) details criteria that can be used to help enhance and sustain collaboration between federal agencies. GAO, *2014 Annual Report: Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, [GAO-14-343SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 8, 2014), identifies government programs that exhibit ineffective or inefficient outcomes or results because of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication and suggests strategies agencies can pursue to improve effectiveness and increase efficiencies.

²¹ We assessed the reliability of the high-level data presented in DOD's annual report on sexual assault in the military that includes data from DOD's Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members from the Defense Manpower Data Center, and we determined that high-level data elements were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report, such as a discussion of the percentage of active duty servicemembers who report that they experienced unwanted sexual contact during initial military training.

recruits is carried out by senior enlisted servicemembers that are serving as instructors for a set period of time.²²

Figure 1: Basic Training Facilities by Service



Source: Department of Defense; Map Resources (map). | GAO-14-806

Recruits who successfully graduate from basic training then move on to subsequent career-specific training. The nature and duration of the career-specific training varies widely, from a few weeks to several

²²The title of these instructors varies by service: the Air Force refers to these instructors as military training instructors, the Army refers to its instructors as drill sergeants, the Navy refers to them as recruit division commanders, and the Marine Corps refers to them as drill instructors.

months, depending on the requirements of the career. For example, Air Force recruits who successfully graduate from basic training then attend technical training, which is conducted primarily at five installations: Goodfellow, Lackland, and Sheppard Air Force Bases in Texas; Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi; and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. Technical training instructors conduct training in specialties including aircraft maintenance, civil engineering, medical services, computer systems, security forces, air traffic control, personnel, comptroller, intelligence, firefighting, and space and missile operations.

DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program

Various offices and organizations in DOD play a role in preventing and responding to sexual assault within the military. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is responsible for developing the overall policy and guidance for the department's sexual assault prevention and response program except for criminal investigative policy matters assigned to the DOD Inspector General and legal processes in the UCMJ. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness oversees the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, which serves as the department's single point of authority, accountability, and oversight for its sexual assault prevention and response program. These responsibilities include providing the military services with guidance and technical support and facilitating the identification and resolution of issues; developing programs, policies, and training standards for the prevention of, reporting of, and response to sexual assault; developing strategic program guidance and joint planning objectives; overseeing the department's collection and maintenance of data on reported alleged sexual assaults involving servicemembers; establishing mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of the department's sexual assault prevention and response program; and preparing the department's mandated annual report to Congress on sexual assaults involving servicemembers.²³

Each military service has established a sexual assault prevention and response office with responsibility for overseeing and managing its sexual assault program. Further, DOD's directive requires the military services to establish sexual assault response coordinator positions and states that at the services' discretion, these positions may be staffed by members of the military or civilian employees.²⁴ Sexual assault response coordinators

²³DOD Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program*, DOD Directive 6495.01, (Jan. 23, 2012).

²⁴DOD Directive 6495.01.

are generally responsible for implementing their respective services' sexual assault prevention and response programs, including coordinating the response to and reporting of sexual assault incidents at an installation or within a geographic area. Other responders include victim advocates, judge advocates, medical and mental health providers, criminal investigative personnel, law enforcement personnel, and chaplains.

DOD provides servicemembers and their dependents 18 years of age and older with two options for reporting an alleged sexual assault:

(1) restricted and (2) unrestricted.²⁵ DOD's restricted reporting option allows sexual assault victims to confidentially disclose an alleged sexual assault to sexual assault response coordinators, uniformed or civilian victim advocates, and health care personnel. Restricted reporting allows victims to receive medical treatment and counseling services without initiating an official investigation. In cases where a victim elects restricted reporting, first responders may not disclose confidential communications or information on the forensic examination to law enforcement or command authorities unless certain exceptions apply,²⁶ and improper disclosure of confidential communications and medical information may result in discipline pursuant to the UCMJ or other adverse personnel or administrative actions. In contrast, DOD's unrestricted reporting option allows sexual assault victims to receive medical treatment and counseling services and request an official investigation of the allegation using existing reporting channels, such as their chain of command or law enforcement.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can occur prior to an incident of unwanted sexual contact. For example, from the 2012 survey of active duty servicemembers, DOD estimated that of the 6.1 percent of women from across all the military services who reported having experienced

²⁵DOD Directive 6495.01.

²⁶DOD Instruction 6495.02, enc. 4, details certain exceptions that authorize disclosure of confidential communications in restricted reports, such as those incidents when disclosure is authorized in writing by the victim; necessary to prevent or mitigate a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of the victim or another person; or ordered by a military official (e.g., a duly authorized trial counsel subpoena in a UCMJ case), federal or state judge, or as required by a federal or state statute or applicable U.S. international agreement.

unwanted sexual contact, approximately 44 percent of those respondents said that they were sexually harassed by the offender prior to the unwanted sexual contact.²⁷ Of the 1.2 percent of men across the services who reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact, approximately 37 percent stated that they were sexually harassed by the offender prior to the unwanted sexual contact.²⁸

Sexual harassment falls under DOD's military equal opportunity program, which is to prevent unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.²⁹ The misconduct can include behavior on or off duty, 24 hours a day. According to a DOD directive, any person in a supervisory or command position who uses or condones any form of sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, pay, or job of a military member or civilian employee is engaging in sexual harassment.³⁰ Similarly, any servicemember or civilian employee who makes deliberate or repeated unwelcome verbal comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature in the workplace is also engaging in sexual harassment. The secretaries of the military departments are responsible for developing and implementing policies to prevent unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment, establishing both formal and informal means for resolving complaints, and ensuring compliance with DOD's policy. The chain of command is the primary and preferred channel for identifying and correcting discriminatory practices—including resolving servicemembers' complaints of sexual harassment. We have previously reported that by policy, the services encourage servicemembers to resolve any complaints of sexual harassment they may have at the lowest possible level first—for example, by confronting the harasser and telling him or her that the behavior is not appreciated, that it is not welcomed, and that it must stop. We reported on DOD's sexual harassment program in September 2011, and we found that DOD's program and policy could be improved and that DOD had limited visibility over the occurrence of sexual harassment. Further, we found that although DOD has established some oversight

²⁷Estimates were derived from the 2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members and have a margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level of 6 percentage points or fewer.

²⁸Estimates have a margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level of 17 percentage points or fewer.

²⁹DOD Directive 1350.2.

³⁰DOD Directive 1350.2.

requirements, it has exercised little oversight of its policies and programs for addressing incidents of sexual harassment. Therefore, we made five recommendations addressing the department's sexual harassment prevention and oversight framework, and DOD concurred with all five of these recommendations and stated that a revision to the key directive would address our recommendations.³¹ As of July 2014, none of these recommendations had been fully implemented; however, DOD officials stated that the directive is currently under revision and that steps are being taken to address these recommendations.

Air Force Reviews of Sexual Assault and Misconduct during Initial Military Training

In response to allegations of sexual assault and other sexual misconduct by Air Force military basic training instructors, the Air Force completed three reviews in order to uncover any weaknesses in the initial military training environment and factors that contributed to the delay in reporting of sexual assault allegations at Lackland Air Force Base. These are the (1) Commander's 2012 report on sexual misconduct at basic training, (2) a review of sexual misconduct at subsequent career-specific training (called technical training in the Air Force), and (3) a law enforcement review of delays in reporting allegations of sexual misconduct. See appendix II for a description of these reports and their methodologies.

According to the Commander's 2012 report, a team, led by a major general in the Air Force, as part of that review interviewed different levels of command leadership, military training instructors and the supervisors of instructors, and faculty and students at technical training schools. Further, the team conducted focus groups with recruits at basic training and military training instructors and their spouses and provided anonymous questionnaires to over 6,000 recruits at basic training and to over 400 military training instructors. In total, the team surveyed 18,000 recruits, military training instructors, technical training instructors, and technical training students. Air Force officials stated that they did not interview identified victims involved with the ongoing investigations of military training instructor misconduct because they were concerned the victims may have felt revictimized by the additional questions. However, the team reviewed law enforcement investigative materials, including interview records and reports associated with individual cases, including victim

³¹GAO, *Preventing Sexual Harassment: DOD Needs Greater Leadership Commitment and an Oversight Framework*, [GAO-11-809](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 21, 2011).

interviews. The Commander's 2012 report focused on the basic training environment. However, the Air Force conducted a review focused on the technical training environment, which focused on 27 cases of alleged trainee-on-trainee sexual assaults.

The Air Force Has Implemented Most of the Commander's Report Recommendations but Has Not Evaluated the Effectiveness of Actions Taken

The Air Force implemented most of the 46 recommendations from the Commander's 2012 report. Specifically, we found that 39 of the 46 recommendations were implemented, but the Air Force analysis stated that it had implemented 42 of the 46 recommendations as of July 2014. However, the Air Force has not taken steps to fully develop a framework for oversight, including performance goals and measures, which would enable it to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions to better prevent and respond to sexual assault and misconduct.

The Air Force Implemented Most of the Recommendations from the Commander's Report

Our analysis found that as of July 2014, the Air Force implemented 39 of the 46 recommendations in the Commander's report, partially implemented another 6, and did not implement 1 recommendation. The Air Force's analysis of its implementation of the recommendations found that it had implemented 42 recommendations and partially implemented 4. In some instances, we disagreed with the Air Force's designation of some recommendations as implemented. For example, the Air Force designated recommendations as implemented if it took some actions in response to those recommendations, while we designated recommendations as partially implemented if further steps are needed to ensure that the changes are fully institutionalized in formalized policy or procedures in order to be sustained beyond leadership changes. We did not evaluate whether these recommendations should be implemented, but assessed if the Air Force took actions that addressed the findings and resulting recommendations from the Commander's report. Table 1 shows the overall comparison of the Air Force's designation of recommendation status to our analysis.

Table 1: Air Force and GAO Analysis of Status of Recommendations in the 2012 Commander's Report as of July 2014

Status of recommendation implementation	Air Force analysis of recommendation implementation	GAO analysis of recommendation implementation
Implemented	42	39
Partially implemented	4	6
Not implemented	0	1

Sources: GAO analysis and Air Force analysis of actions taken by the Air Force in response to recommendations. | GAO-14-806

Note: We designated recommendations as partially implemented when analyses found that additional actions are needed to fully address a recommendation or that further steps are needed to ensure that the changes are institutionalized in Air Force processes and practices. For the purposes of this report, we define institutionalized changes as those that have a clear method for being sustained beyond leadership changes, such as through formalized policy and procedural changes.

The Air Force Implemented 39 of 46 Recommendations

We found that the Air Force implemented 39 of the 46 recommendations in the Commander's 2012 report, including some recommendations that addressed factors cited in the Commander's report as significantly contributing to an environment in which sexual assaults and other related misconduct could occur and go undetected. For example, the Commander's report found that having few midlevel officers led to a lack of oversight in the basic training environment and that the selection criteria for military training instructors did not effectively require appropriate rank and experience levels necessary for military training instructor duties. As a result, the Air Force implemented recommendations to increase leadership and oversight positions in its basic training structure and also upgraded its military training instructor requirements to at least the rank of technical sergeant (E-6) with 1 year of time in grade, as well as completion of Airman Leadership School.³²

The Commander's report also found that the Air Force did not have specific criteria or time standards for reporting allegations of sexual assaults and related misconduct. As a result, the Air Force implemented actions to address recommendations that included issuing clear policies

³²Airman Leadership School is a 5-week Air Force program that is designed to develop airmen into effective frontline supervisors and focuses on leadership abilities, the profession of arms, and building effective communication.

The Air Force Partially
Implemented or Did Not
Implement 7 of 46
Recommendations

that require all sexual assault and sexual misconduct allegations to be reported to the commanders of the squadron, group, wing, and 2nd Air Force as well as to the judge advocates within 24 hours of detection.³³ Furthermore, the Commander's report found that substantiated misconduct was often dealt with using disciplinary tools less severe than warranted by the facts. The Air Force addressed a related recommendation by issuing an instruction that requires squadron commanders to immediately suspend a military training instructor from the training environment upon notification of allegations involving sexual assault and sexual misconduct, and, if allegations are substantiated, to remove the individual from instructor duty permanently.³⁴

The Air Force provided information about the status of steps it was taking to address the recommendations. As of July 2014, we found that 7 of the 46 recommendations were either partially implemented or not implemented. Specifically, we found that 6 of the 46 recommendations are partially implemented because our analysis showed that additional actions are needed to fully address each recommendation or that further steps are needed to ensure that the changes are institutionalized in Air Force processes and practices.³⁵ Specifically, these 6 partially implemented recommendations are as follows:

1. Eliminate weaknesses in existing detection measures by improving surveillance and entry control procedures.

³³Department of the Air Force, Air Education and Training Command, *Order to Report Allegations of Military Training Instructor (MTI), Military Training Leader (MTL), and Instructor Misconduct*, Memorandum (Sept. 17, 2012); Department of the Air Force, Headquarters, 2nd Air Force (Air Education and Training Command), 2nd Air Force, *Standards of Conduct and Training*, Guidance Memorandum 36-01 (Sept. 17, 2013); and Department of the Air Force, Air Education and Training Command, *Recruiting, Education, and Training Standards of Conduct*, AETC Instruction 36-2909 (Dec. 2, 2013).

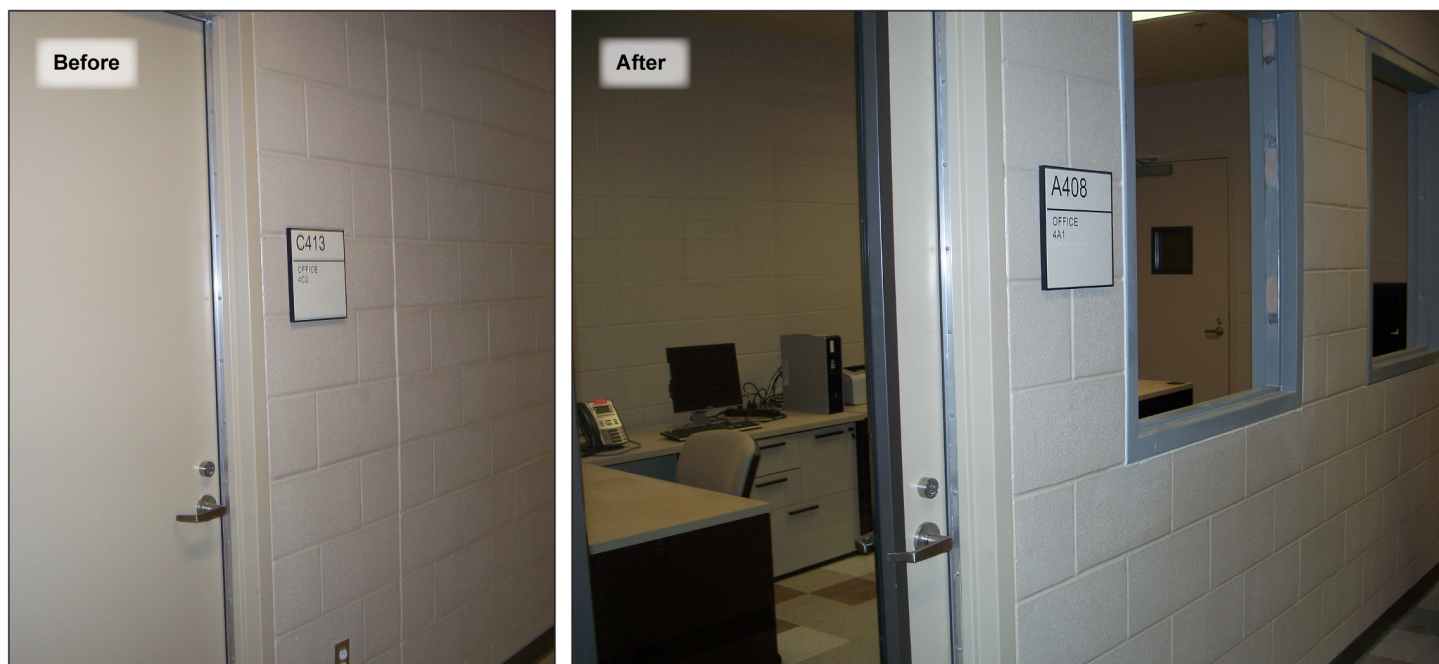
³⁴Department of the Air Force, 737th Training Group (Air Education and Training Command), *737 TRG Operating Instruction 36-3* (Dec. 28, 2012).

³⁵For the purposes of this report, we define institutionalized changes as those that have a clear method for being sustained beyond leadership changes, such as through formalized policy and procedural changes. An organizational change such as addressing weaknesses within the Air Force's basic training to better prevent sexual assault may take several years to complete. Institutionalizing changes in policy or procedures may be necessary to sustain those changes beyond leadership turnover, which occurs frequently within the military, such as every 2 years in many positions. Our prior work found that organizational change and transformation can take 5 to 7 years. See [GAO-03-669](#).

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2. Increase staffing of military training instructors to fill all 528 authorized positions.
 3. Shorten the instructors' tour length to a maximum of 3 years and do not allow them follow-on special duty assignments.
 4. Shorten the duration of basic military training from 8.5 weeks to 7.5 weeks to eliminate "white space" in the basic training schedule.
 5. Ensure that candidates across all career fields are considered for the command of training squadrons.
 6. Ensure that training on how to report military training instructor misconduct reassures trainees that there will be no negative consequences for them if they allege sexual assault or related unacceptable behavior.

We designated 4 of these recommendations (numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4) as partially implemented because changes were under way as of July 2014, but the Air Force had estimated completion dates for those actions. We therefore agreed with the Air Force that it is progressing toward implementing these 4 recommendations. For example, Air Force officials stated that the 2 recommendations (numbers 2 and 3 above) designated as partially completed related to the staffing of military training instructors will be phased in over time and that personnel adjustments are under way and will be completed by June 2015. In addition, in response to a recommendation we designated as partially implemented related to implementing security measures (number 1 above), Air Force officials stated that upgrading their security surveillance and monitoring equipment required a \$2 million investment and as of July 2014 the video camera systems attained full operational capability in three of their facilities and additional work will be conducted in fiscal year 2015 to expand this system to other basic training facilities. According to Air Force officials, the upgraded equipment is to provide improved security with better fidelity and longer storage periods of video monitoring. During our visit in November 2013, we observed partial completion of other actions related to this recommendation, including doors to utility closets that were not removed, and military training instructors' offices in newly constructed recruit housing facilities not having windows cut into them, as shown in figure 2. In July 2014, Air Force officials stated that most of these changes had since been completed prior to trainees' occupying those spaces; however, the Air Force is constructing new recruit housing facilities through 2021, and these changes will need to be in all newly constructed facilities.

Figure 2: Photos of a Military Training Instructor Office at Lackland Air Base Before and After Cutting of New Windows and Glass Door Panels



Source: GAO. | GAO-14-806

We designated the remaining 2 (numbers 5 and 6) recommendations mentioned above as partially implemented because the Air Force had taken steps to address the recommendations but additional actions would be necessary to ensure that the corrective actions are fully institutionalized in Air Force processes and practices through changes in policy or procedures. For example, in response to recommendation 5 to ensure that candidates across all career fields are considered for the command of training squadrons, the Air Force requested commander selections for 2013 and 2015 rotations from a pool that consisted of all career fields. Therefore, the Air Force designated this recommendation as complete. However, Air Force officials do not know whether they will be given this priority of choice in commander selections in the future. As a result, the Air Force has not institutionalized this change, and we are designating this recommendation as partially completed.

Additionally, of the 7 recommendations, we designated 1 recommendation as not implemented because the Air Force did not provide any evidence that it addressed the recommendation. Specifically,

the Commander's 2012 report recommended that the Air Force develop and institutionalize a more effective incentive program for military training instructor duty. For example, the Commander's report suggested that the Air Force consider incentives toward promotion similar to those in the Army and Navy. The Air Force stated that it preserved the top rate for special duty assignment pay for military training instructor duty in fiscal year 2014 while other special duty pays were eliminated or reduced because of fiscal constraints. However, the Air Force did not explain its rationale for not adding other incentives to this duty as recommended and made no identifiable changes; further, according to Air Force officials, the Air Force does not plan to add other incentives to this duty. Therefore, we designated this recommendation as not implemented. As discussed earlier, we did not evaluate whether these recommendations should be implemented, but assessed if the Air Force took actions that addressed the findings and resulting recommendations from the Commander's report.

Appendix III includes a detailed discussion of each of the 7 recommendations we assessed as partially implemented or not implemented.

The Air Force Has Taken Some Steps to Provide Oversight of Efforts Intended to Better Prevent Sexual Assault during Basic Training, but It Has Not Fully Established Performance Goals and Measures to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Actions Taken

The Air Force has taken some steps for evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken within its basic training resulting from the implementation of the Commander's 2012 report recommendations, such as by establishing a council to provide senior leadership and oversight. However, the Air Force has not taken steps to fully develop a framework for oversight, including performance goals and measures that would enable it to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions to better prevent and respond to sexual assault and misconduct.

The Air Force Has Taken Steps to Provide Senior Leadership and Oversight of Actions to Better Prevent Sexual Assault during Basic Training

The Air Force has taken some steps for evaluating the effectiveness of the organizational change within its basic training resulting from the implementation of the Commander's 2012 report recommendations, which were intended to better prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual misconduct during basic training. Top leadership involvement is a key practice for organizations undergoing change.³⁶ Following the 2012 Commander's report, the Commander of Air Education and Training Command directed the establishment of the Recruiting, Education, and Training Oversight Council, comprising senior leadership and key stakeholders from across the Air Force's recruiting and training environments, to oversee improvement efforts by (1) reviewing the progress and effectiveness of previously implemented actions in response to the Commander's report; (2) providing an expanded perspective on future actions; and (3) advising the Commander on strategic issues affecting airman safety, good order, and discipline within the initial military environment. In February 2014, the Air Force formalized this oversight council with a charter, directing that the council meet at least once a quarter in order to monitor the health of the Air Force's recruiting, education, and training environments to ensure appropriate leadership and instructor behavior with respect to recruits, students, and trainees. The charter states that the oversight council is to fulfill a command-wide role by defining and implementing broad objectives to ensure the continuity, long-term oversight, and safeguarding of the recruiting, education, and training environments. The Commander of the Air Education and Training Command stated in November 2012 that one of the first steps of the oversight council is to develop a set of performance measures to evaluate actions taken to better address sexual assault and other misconduct.³⁷ Further, the charter states that the

³⁶In 2002, we convened a forum of public and private sector senior leaders and academics to identify useful practices and lessons learned from organizational change and transformations, and we subsequently reported the key practices that were consistently identified from successful organizational changes and transformations. These key practices can be modified to fit the circumstances and conditions that are relevant to a particular agency as it transforms its culture to be more results oriented. See [GAO-03-669](#) for the key practices for organizational transformations, and for examples of how agency programs were reviewed against these key practices, see [GAO-11-809](#) and GAO, *Military Personnel: Sustained Leadership and Oversight Needed to Improve DOD's Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Abuse*, [GAO-10-923](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 22, 2010).

³⁷Following the publication of the Commander's 2012 report, the Commander of the Air Education and Training Command then issued another report in November 2012 addressing the deficiencies outlined in the September 2012 Commander's report.

council is to establish reliable and meaningful metrics and develop and implement strategies to ensure the long-term sustainment of corrective actions and improvements to the Air Force's recruiting, education, and training environments.

In addition to establishing an oversight council, Air Force officials identified six potential data sources that they stated contain key information for tracking the status of implementation of the recommendations from the Commander's report. These include various surveys and databases of information such as disciplinary actions taken against military training instructors. For example, Air Force officials stated that in response to the Commander's report, the Air Force worked with the RAND Corporation to develop the Trainee Abuse and Misconduct Survey to help them evaluate the extent of sexual assault and other misconduct during basic training. The survey asks recruits if they experienced, witnessed, or heard about sexual assault or other misconduct (e.g., sexual harassment and unprofessional relationships) committed by either their military training instructors or other recruits. Additionally, the survey asks recruits about their comfort in reporting allegations of sexual assault or misconduct and their familiarity with different sexual assault resources, as well as why they would or would not report a sexual assault or other misconduct. See appendix IV for more detail about each of the six data sources.

The Air Force Has Not Established Time Frames for Completing Performance Goals and Measures to Evaluate the Extent to Which Its Efforts Better Prevent Sexual Assault during Basic Training

While the Air Force has taken steps to address the recommendations from the Commander's 2012 report and focused largely on improving the basic training environment, it has not fully developed a framework for oversight that includes establishing performance goals and measures that would enable it to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions to better prevent and respond to sexual assault and misconduct. Key practices for organizational transformations call for using a results-oriented framework to enable successful program oversight, and for such a framework to include establishing clear performance goals and measuring progress toward achieving those goals. Further, as part of that oversight framework, performance information is to be used to make decisions and communicate results.³⁸ This involves identifying performance goals and measures early on, including establishing performance baselines by

³⁸See [GAO-03-669](#) for the key practices for organizational transformations, such as the implementation of a results-oriented framework with clearly established performance goals and measures.

tracking performance over time, identifying targets for improving performance, and measuring progress against those targets.³⁹

Air Force officials have also stated that oversight of Air Force actions taken is important to ensure that it is responding to new challenges over time. Nonetheless, although the Air Force has taken some initial steps, the Air Force has not established time frames for developing and implementing performance goals or measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts. Key management practices for organizational change include setting goals and timeframes because change could take years to complete.⁴⁰ Further, our prior work on internal control standards for the federal government has shown that agencies rely on timely information to carry out their responsibilities.⁴¹ Air Force officials stated that because baseline data did not exist prior to the sexual misconduct investigations at their basic training, they plan to set performance goals and use the results of the survey of basic training recruits to serve as a baseline for comparison, and to develop performance measures based on their identified potential data sources. However, during the 2 years since the Commander's report was issued, the Air Force has not established performance goals and measures for evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken in response to the recommendations intended to better prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assault in basic training.

Although the Air Force tracks some information resulting from the various data sources we previously described, such as the number of allegations of sexual assault or misconduct, the Air Force has not identified time frames for completing the development of performance goals to be used

³⁹We have used the above criteria in other reports. See, for example, [GAO-14-49](#), which also included criteria for performance measurement from GAO, *Aviation Weather: Agencies Need to Improve Performance Measurement and Fully Address Key Challenges*, [GAO-10-843](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2010); Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief Information Officer, *Guide for Developing and Using Information Technology (IT) Performance Measurements* (Washington, D.C.: October 2001); and General Services Administration, Office of Governmentwide Policy, *Performance-Based Management: Eight Steps To Develop and Use Information Technology Performance Measures Effectively* (Washington, D.C.: 1996).

⁴⁰[GAO-03-669](#)

⁴¹GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

for evaluating any improvements resulting from its efforts under way intended to better prevent and respond to sexual assault at basic training. Air Force officials stated that they would use data from the RAND recruit survey and other data sources to develop metrics for measuring the impact of actions taken in response to those recommendations. Data from the RAND recruit survey from the first quarter of fiscal year 2014 provided by the Air Force show that 63 percent of recruits responded that they could meet with a sexual assault response coordinator without anyone in their flight knowing. Similarly, 43 percent of recruits responded that they could use a sexual assault hotline and 50 percent of respondents stated they could use the critique box without others knowing. According to the Commander's 2012 report, recruits stated that they feared potential backlash from military training instructors because of a lack of anonymity in using feedback mechanisms. Further, the RAND survey asks recruits to identify reasons why they did not report sexual assault and other misconduct, such as "I didn't think it was serious enough to report" or "I was afraid reporting might cause trouble for my flight," and Air Force officials stated that they track these responses. While trends in survey responses may be monitored by the Air Force from quarter to quarter, without completing the development of performance improvement goals, and implementing the use of those goals, such as reducing the number of responses to the survey giving specific reasons for not reporting, it may be difficult to determine if actions taken to increase confidence in reporting are achieving the desired effect.

After the issuance of the 2012 report, the Commander of the Air Education and Training Command stated that one of the first tasks of the Air Force oversight council would be to establish a set of performance measures to help better understand the effectiveness of their actions and where adjustments can be made to improve performance and that effective metrics are a key component of a strong oversight process. Our prior work has found that an effective results-oriented framework for oversight uses performance measures to assess progress against performance goals. Further, our work has shown that high-performing organizations use performance measures to determine if programs are achieving goals or if additional actions need to be taken, and that successful performance measures have key attributes that demonstrate results and provide useful information for decision making.⁴² Throughout

⁴²See [GAO-03-669](#) and [GAO-03-143](#). [GAO-03-143](#) identifies key attributes of successful performance measures that apply to any government program.

our review, Air Force officials stated that they were in the early stages of developing performance measures to assess the improvements in leadership and institutional safeguards in training as a result of their actions to implement the recommendations from the Commander's report. Further, they stated that developing performance measures would be a focus after completing a majority of the actions recommended by the Commander's report. However, as of July 2014, the Air Force has not completed the development of these specific performance measures. Additionally, the Air Force has not identified an interim or expected completion date or timelines for completing its efforts to develop performance measures, but officials state that efforts are under way and that the Recruiting, Education, and Training Oversight Council will provide quarterly oversight of performance measures once they are fully developed.

Although the Air Force has not fully developed and implemented performance goals and measures, Air Force officials maintain that their actions are achieving intended results to better prevent sexual assault incidents during basic training. When we asked Air Force officials to explain how they know their actions are achieving the intended results, they stated that their actions are achieving the desired results because there had not been a report of instructor sexual assault against a recruit since 2012. However, the two Air Force command-directed investigations that focused on basic training revealed that the series of sexual assaults and other incidents of misconduct that were uncovered were not initially reported by trainees to authorities, and were only uncovered by subsequent investigations by Air Force Office of Special Investigations and Security Forces Office of Investigations.

Further, Air Force officials acknowledged that reports of instructor misconduct alone are not a sufficient indicator of success. For example, an Air Force official stated that the trainee survey showed that while instructors were restricted from sleeping quarters, more recruit-on-recruit misconduct was occurring and procedures were changed to include random patrols of sleeping quarters by a team of two instructors. As a result, the official stated that there may also be other unintended consequences. Further, an Air Force official said that because of the increased attention on the Air Force's basic training environment as a result of the sexual misconduct investigations, potential offenders may be less likely to commit misconduct but that the "spotlight effect" may

decrease over time. For example, in the fiscal year 2012 DOD annual report on sexual assault,⁴³ the Air Force reported on its implementation of recommendations from the Commander's report. DOD uses its annual report to communicate the important programs, initiatives, and policy improvements to the department's sexual assault prevention and response program developed and implemented during the prior fiscal year, including service-specific improvements detailed in service input to the overall report. However, the Air Force's input to the fiscal year 2013 DOD annual report⁴⁴ did not include any information regarding the Air Force's efforts to better prevent and respond to sexual assault within basic training, and it did not discuss any evaluation of effectiveness resulting from actions taken in response to the Commander's report. Although the Air Force was not required to include such information, the absence of performance goals and measures, or information on any plans and time frames for completion of development of goals and measures, makes it difficult for Air Force leadership and external stakeholders to assess progress.

Further, without establishing a framework for oversight to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions intended to better prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assault incidents during basic training, the Air Force will not know whether it needs to sustain the efforts it has implemented as a result of the recommendations from the Commander's report or undertake different corrective actions. Decision makers may be operating without performance information based on performance goals for improvement and measures that demonstrate results. Establishing time frames for completing the development and implementation of performance goals and measures will better position the Air Force to evaluate its actions taken in a timely manner and to know whether to sustain its efforts or undertake different corrective actions. Further, understanding and communicating the results of the actions taken by the Air Force may be difficult, both internally and to external stakeholders such as to DOD's senior leadership and Congress, without performance information over time.

⁴³Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2012* (May 3, 2013).

⁴⁴Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2013*, (Apr. 22, 2014).

Opportunities Exist for the Military Services to Better Share Lessons Learned and Leverage Efforts to Obtain Comprehensive Data for Overseeing Sexual Assault during Initial Military Training

The military services' Council on Recruit Basic Training (CORBT) and DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office are some of the ways DOD shares lessons learned pertaining to sexual assaults that occur during initial military training, but areas of authority and roles and responsibility are not clear. Without defining areas of authority and roles and responsibilities, DOD and the services could miss opportunities to further improve their response and prevention of sexual assault and misconduct during initial military training. Furthermore, three of the services have ongoing efforts to obtain more data about sexual assault and sexual misconduct during some parts of initial military training, but none of the services have such efforts under way or plans to leverage each other's efforts to obtain more comprehensive and detailed data during both phases of initial training, basic and career specific.

CORBT, DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, and the Military Services Share Lessons Learned

Services Share Lessons Learned for Preventing Sexual Assault in Basic Training, but Roles and Responsibilities for Sharing Lessons Learned in All Initial Military Training Are Not Clearly Defined

CORBT serves as a forum for senior military service leaders to discuss lessons learned related to sexual assault prevention during basic training. CORBT was formed in 2013 and comprises two bodies: a general officer executive board and a council composed of officers from the Army, Air Force, and Navy. The executive board is to meet once a year and the council is to meet quarterly to share lessons learned to improve how the services conduct basic training. We found that the council currently functions as a multiservice forum to share information and lessons learned specifically related to better preventing and responding to sexual assault at basic training. For example, the April 2013 CORBT meeting minutes state that representatives from the services discussed issues related to sexual assault and misconduct prevention as well as other areas of concern specific to basic training, such as physical fitness standards and recruit attrition rates. Specifically regarding sexual assault and misconduct prevention, the minutes show that representatives from the services discussed sexual assault prevention training and the Air Force representative provided updates on actions taken in response to the Commander's report. Further, according to the minutes,

representatives discussed some policies and procedures that differed among the services that can have an impact on incidents of sexual assault and misconduct. For example, the representatives discussed instructor selection standards and the policies to review nonjudicial punishments in the records of instructor candidates. The Air Force representative stated that the Air Force will not accept a candidate with any record of punishment, an Army official stated that the Army screens the past 5 years, and a Navy official stated that the Navy screens the past 3 years.

According to its current draft charter, members of CORBT include the defined co-chairs from the Departments of the Air Force, the Army, and the Navy, as well as the Coast Guard.⁴⁵ However, as of July 2014, the charter for the council has not been formalized and signed, and the current draft of the council's charter has some limitations, such as (1) the council's role as the forum for discussing sexual assault prevention within basic training, or possibly the entire range of initial military training, is not clearly defined and (2) key stakeholders related to sexual assault prevention and response are not clearly identified. Key practices for interagency collaboration include committed leadership and clearly defining roles and responsibilities when working across agency boundaries.⁴⁶ As such, committed leadership by those involved in the collaborative effort, from all levels of the organization, is important to overcome the many barriers to working across agency boundaries, and involving stakeholders is also important in decision making. Additionally, agencies can strengthen their commitment to work collaboratively by articulating their agreements in formal documents, such as a memorandum of understanding, interagency guidance, or an interagency planning document, signed by senior officials in the respective agencies. The current draft of CORBT's charter generally describes the council's mission of sharing ideas and lessons learned among the military services to improve basic training and share lessons learned for preventing sexual

⁴⁵Memorandum of Understanding between the Commander 2nd Air Force; the Deputy Commanding General, Initial Military Training Center of Excellence; the Commander, Force Readiness Command; and the Commander, Naval Service Training Command, *Council on Recruit Basic Training (CORBT) Charter* (Draft).

⁴⁶In 2005, we conducted work to identify criteria that can be used to assess collaboration between federal agencies. We identified eight key practices that can help federal agencies enhance and sustain their collaborative efforts. See [GAO-06-15](#).

assault at basic training. However, without clearly defining and formalizing CORBT's role as a forum for sharing sexual assault prevention, investigation, or response lessons learned from subsequent career-specific training as well as basic training, and including key stakeholders, DOD cannot ensure that the council addresses sexual assault and sexual misconduct prevention across initial military training and that lessons learned are appropriately and efficiently shared across the services.

The original version of the CORBT charter from 2013 did not include any reference to the council's role regarding sharing lessons learned or discussing sexual assault prevention. The current version of the draft charter for the council was revised in July 2014 to state that the council will discuss the services' sexual assault programs; however, the charter has not been finalized to formally define the council's role in collaborating across the services in order to share lessons learned and better prevent sexual assault during basic training. As of July 2014, service officials stated that the charter would be signed and formalized within a few months, although a specific date of estimated completion was not available. An agenda from a January 2014 meeting of the council shows that participants discussed the possibility of using the forum to share lessons learned regarding sexual assault prevention at subsequent career-specific training. However, as of July 2014, the draft charter has not been revised to reflect this change and only some of the co-chairs from the military services are responsible for the entire range of initial military training—the Army and the Air Force co-chairs—while the Navy co-chair is responsible for only basic training within the Navy and not subsequent career-specific training. In addition, CORBT's draft charter does not clearly identify key stakeholders who should participate in the council.

As discussed, agencies can strengthen their commitment to work collaboratively by involving key stakeholders in decision making and articulating their agreements in formal documents signed by senior officials in the respective agencies.⁴⁷ Further, because organizational change can take several years, formalized policies and procedures are important to sustain efforts beyond leadership turnover.⁴⁸ We found that not all key stakeholders to the issue of sexual assault and misconduct

⁴⁷ [GAO-06-15](#).

⁴⁸ [GAO-03-669](#).

prevention participate in CORBT and there is not a formal membership list of all identified key stakeholders. For example, DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office serves as the department's single point of responsibility for DOD's sexual assault prevention and response program and related policy and the office has been represented at prior meetings of the council, but this office has not been identified as a stakeholder in the council's charter. In addition, although CORBT is a multiservice council, the Marine Corps is not identified in the current draft charter and it does not participate in CORBT discussions. Department of the Navy officials stated that the Marine Corps is represented as it is a part of the Department of the Navy. However, policies, procedures, and standards for basic training differ between the Navy and the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps participated at the creation of CORBT, but Marine Corps leadership made the decision to no longer participate. Further, the charter does not clarify how representatives responsible for certain aspects of sexual assault response are included in CORBT discussions, such as medical personnel or representatives who are responsible for investigations or adjudications, including the military criminal investigative offices and judge advocates.

Additionally, while better preventing and responding to sexual assault is a focus within DOD, the department acknowledges that sexual harassment is likewise a significant and persistent problem and this type of misconduct can precede sexual assault. As sexual harassment is a form of discrimination, preventing and responding to sexual harassment is not a part of DOD's sexual assault prevention and response program but instead a part of DOD's military equal opportunity program, as noted earlier. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness has responsibility for developing the overall policy for DOD's military equal opportunity program and monitoring compliance with the department's policy and has delegated these responsibilities to its Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity. Representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense or service equal opportunity offices have not participated in CORBT meetings and are not identified as key stakeholders in the council.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Army officials stated that the Department of the Army is the only service that has combined its programs for preventing and responding to both sexual assault and sexual harassment into one office, the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Office.

DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the Services Have Identified Lessons Learned to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Assault but Have Not Developed a Method to Determine and Share Best Practices

As evidenced by DOD's data from its 2012 survey, sexual assault is a concern across all of initial military training, not only basic training, as are other forms of sexual misconduct such as sexual harassment. The role of the council has evolved over time as evidenced through revisions to its draft charter to include additional participants and to include a focus on sharing lessons learned for sexual assault prevention and response specifically within basic training. However, as of July 2014, the draft charter does not discuss the council's role regarding sexual assault and other misconduct prevention across all of initial military training or identify key stakeholders who are important for addressing these issues. A senior DOD official stated that it would be beneficial for all of the military services to participate and that CORBT would be an appropriate forum for discussing lessons learned for all of initial military training. However, as of July 2014, service officials stated that they did not plan to revise the draft charter to define the council's role for sharing lessons learned for subsequent career-specific training or identify additional key stakeholders in the charter. Without a formalized and final charter that clearly identifies CORBT's role regarding initial military training and clearly identifies key stakeholders who should participate, DOD cannot ensure that the council is the most effective collaborative effort for sharing lessons learned and key practices for better prevention and response to sexual assault during initial military training.

DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office and the military services identified a number of lessons learned and promising practices for sexual assault prevention and response during the course of this review. Lessons learned provide a powerful method of sharing good ideas for improving work processes, quality, and cost-effectiveness, and there are key practices that can be used to identify and apply lessons learned, such as collecting and analyzing information to identify lessons that lead to recommendations and sharing and disseminating these lessons.⁵⁰ Officials from DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office

⁵⁰See GAO, *Telecommunications: GSA Needs to Share and Prioritize Lessons Learned to Avoid Future Transition Delays*, [GAO-14-63](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 5, 2013). This report identifies six key practices to help validate practices for sharing lessons learned as these lessons provide a powerful method of sharing ideas for improving work processes, quality, and cost-effectiveness. The key practices were identified primarily using GAO, *NASA: Better Mechanisms Needed for Sharing Lessons Learned*, [GAO-02-195](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 30, 2002), and Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Establishing a Lessons Learned Program: Observations, Insights, and Lessons* (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: June 2011).

provided a list of service-specific efforts that they considered to be “promising practices,” including peer mentoring programs among Navy enlisted personnel and the Air Force-developed special victims’ counsel, a legal counsel that provides legal advice and representation to victims throughout the military justice process, which was established in each of the services by January 2014. DOD officials stated that a promising practice is an identified practice that has worked within at least one organization and shows promise during its early stages for becoming a best practice with long-term sustainable impact. They stated that they define a “best practice” as a research-validated or field-tested method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means. Further, they stated that it was a goal to formalize a process within DOD to identify and assess best and promising practices for sexual assault prevention and response by October 2013, but that obtaining the data to support this process was a challenge. As of July 2014, this process has not been completed, although DOD officials stated that this was still a priority.

Service officials from headquarters-level sexual assault prevention and response offices and command leadership at the initial military training locations we visited identified service-specific promising practices. For example, service officials provided examples such as peer mentoring programs for enlisted personnel; physical security initiatives, such as alarm systems and guard procedures; and publishing or posting lists of sexual misconduct offenses and resulting punishments, with no identifiable personal information, in order to deter sexual misconduct. When we asked service officials to describe how they knew these policies or procedures were achieving the intended impact of better preventing or responding to sexual assault, officials stated that obtaining data and developing performance measures to show progress are challenging, however, many noted that these steps are a focus. For example, the services track and measure the number of reported sexual assaults, but officials stated that this measure alone is not a sufficient indicator of progress, as an increase in reports may reflect more comfort and trust in the reporting process than an actual increase in sexual assault incidents. Each military department was required by the Secretary of Defense to carry out a review of its initial military training environments and report on efforts regarding prevention and reporting of sexual assault and other

misconduct,⁵¹ and these resulting reports are discussed in DOD's fiscal year 2013 annual report on sexual assault within the military. In these service reviews of initial military training, service officials identified what they believe to be key practices or lessons learned for combating sexual assault and misconduct overall, such as dedicated and involved leadership, sexual assault prevention training, and the core values of the services. However, these service assessments did not include performance information, such as measures, demonstrating the impact of these identified key practices or lessons learned.

We found that the services have varying policies and procedures in place intended to reduce opportunities for sexual assault incidents, and they could be assessed for whether to share with the other services, as another key practice for lessons learned is to validate the accuracy and applicability of lessons to apply them to other programs or projects.⁵² For example, the Air Force, the Army, and the Navy prohibit recruits from being alone with any instructor for any reason, while the Marine Corps allows instructors to be alone with recruits of the same gender. The Marine Corps segregates female and male recruits during basic training and the training instructors are the same gender as the recruits. However, this policy does not preclude opportunities for same-sex sexual assault. Further, commanders of career-specific training sometimes limit the liberties of students regarding overnight privileges and alcohol use, and the Army prohibits alcohol use during initial military training entirely.

Opportunities Exist for Services to Leverage Ongoing Efforts to Collect More Comprehensive and Detailed Information about Sexual Assault and Misconduct during Initial Military Training

DOD has some extensive data sources related to reported sexual assaults and survey data related to unwanted sexual contact. However, none of the data sources provide the services with the types of data needed to oversee their efforts to prevent sexual assault and related misconduct during initial military training, such as better information about unreported sexual assaults and data about sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment or unprofessional relationships. As a result, three of the services have taken steps to obtain more comprehensive, detailed data, but these efforts vary by service regarding the comprehensiveness and level of detail of the data obtained, and none of the military services

⁵¹Secretary of Defense, *Prevention and Reporting of Sexual Assault and Other Misconduct in Initial Military Training* (Sept. 25, 2012).

⁵²[GAO-14-63](#).

have surveys that provide comprehensive and detailed information on both the basic and career-specific training environments or plans to leverage each other's surveys. Standards for internal controls in the federal government require that an agency must have relevant, reliable information, both financial and nonfinancial, relating to external as well as internal events, and that information should be recorded and communicated.⁵³

DOD has recently developed a database that is intended to serve as the single system of record of reported sexual assault cases across the department, and has administered surveys to gather more information about the incidence of sexual assault and sexual harassment. However, DOD does not have a data source that provides more comprehensive and detailed information about sexual assaults and other misconduct, such as sexual harassment and unprofessional relationships that can occur specifically during initial training, especially information about sexual assaults and misconduct that goes unreported to authorities. DOD reports that sexual assault is an underreported crime, as shown by the higher incidence of anonymous survey responses DOD received as compared to reported sexual assaults, which contributes to the difficulty of obtaining such data. The following are sources of data DOD has to obtain information about the reporting of and prevalence of sexual assault and misconduct and the command climate surrounding sexual assault.

- *Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database:* This database was designated by the department as the system of record for sexual assault restricted and unrestricted incident information in 2014, but was not designed to contain any information about sexual harassment or unprofessional relationships.
- *DOD's Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members:* This survey is designed to assess the prevalence of unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment in the active duty military. There are questions in the survey that ask respondents to identify if they experienced an incidence of unwanted sexual contact while in basic training or other training environments. For example, as previously discussed, this survey estimated that of the 6.1 percent of women from across all the military services who reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact, 6 percent reported that the

⁵³[GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.](#)

incident occurred during enlisted basic training and 19 percent reported it occurred during subsequent training.⁵⁴ However, Defense Manpower and Data Center officials responsible for this survey stated that it does not allow DOD to accurately determine more detailed estimates for incidents that occurred while in basic training or other training environments, such as whether the assault was committed by a superior or peer or why the assault was not reported to authorities.

- *DOD's Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute's Organizational Climate Survey:* The survey is designed to help commanders assess critical organizational climate dimensions that can affect mission, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. However, DOD officials stated that recruits are not a part of the population that is surveyed and there are no questions regarding a servicemember's experience during basic training. Also, not all trainees in subsequent career-specific training are included because the survey is administered annually and the duration of training varies from a few weeks to many months depending on the training. Congress recently mandated that command climate assessments regarding sexual assaults be conducted within 120 days of when a new commander assumes command and at least annually thereafter and that the results of these climate assessments be tracked and verified by the service secretaries.⁵⁵

Each of these data sources has limitations in providing detailed sexual assault and sexual misconduct information specific to initial military training. However, initial military training is comprised of young men and women of junior enlisted ranks, and DOD has some data to suggest that initial military training is an important area of concern for DOD related to sexual assault, as shown in table 2.

⁵⁴These estimates have a margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level of 6 percentage points or fewer.

⁵⁵Pub. L. No. 112-239, § 572, 126 Stat. 1753 (Jan. 2, 2013), as amended by Pub. L. No. 113-66, § 1721, 127 Stat. 970 (Dec. 26, 2013), codified at 10 USC § 1561 (note).

Table 2: Age and Rank of Department of Defense Sexual Assault Victims and Offenders

	Percentage of completed unrestricted investigations for fiscal year 2012	Percentage of completed unrestricted investigations for fiscal year 2013
Victim aged 16 to 24 years	69	65
Victim rank E1 through E4	73	63
Offender aged 16 to 24 years	41	41
Offender rank E1 through E4	51	47

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data. | GAO-14-806

Note: E1 through E4 are junior enlisted pay grades that correspond with military rank and typically years of service. For example, servicemembers in pay grades E-1 through E-3 are usually either in some kind of training status or on their initial assignment.

Initial military training is comprised of enlisted personnel primarily of these ranges of age and enlisted ranks.⁵⁶ Further, several military service officials stated that there are indications that initial military training, as well as first duty station assignments, are areas of concern regarding sexual assaults because of the vulnerability of these populations to sexual assault and other related misconduct over some other populations within the military, although DOD has noted that sexual assault and related misconduct occur across the entire range of the military, even if not at the same frequency.

DOD's data sources have limitations in their ability to provide more comprehensive and detailed sexual assault and sexual misconduct information that is specific to initial military training. As a result, the military services have taken steps on their own initiative to obtain more information about sexual assaults and incidences of sexual misconduct that occur during initial military training, especially those that go unreported to authorities. The following lists the service-initiated efforts to obtain more information about sexual assault and sexual misconduct during initial military training; however, the level of detail and

⁵⁶These ranks and age ranges would also include enlisted personnel assigned to the operating forces, and several DOD officials stated during the course of our review that sexual assaults are a concern at the first duty station of enlisted personnel; however, the scope of our review was limited to initial military training. Applicants to enlist in the armed forces must have signed parental consent prior to age 18.

comprehensiveness, as well as the anonymity, of the information obtained varies both by service and also within a service regarding the information obtained from those in basic training and subsequent career-specific training. Specifically, the Navy's survey regarding sexual assault and misconduct during career-specific training is comprehensive and detailed, while the Air Force has a comprehensive and detailed survey of its basic training recruits. The Army is hoping to develop a more comprehensive survey for the basic training environment, while the Marine Corps does not have such plans. None of the military services have detailed survey data to help provide data or information on both the basic and career-specific training environments or plans to leverage each other's surveys.

- *Air Force:* As previously discussed, as part of its response to the Commander's 2012 report, the Air Force worked with the RAND Corporation to develop and administer an anonymous survey of its basic training recruit population in fiscal year 2014. The survey instrument describes its purpose as a means to provide all recruits a confidential way to report to leadership any incidents of bullying, maltreatment, maltraining, unprofessional relationships, or unwanted sexual experiences that occur during basic training. Data from the survey responses are provided to leadership so leaders can understand and address problems within basic training. Questions in the survey address sexual misconduct between recruits, sexual assault or sexual misconduct committed by instructors, whether the sexual assault or sexual misconduct was reported, reasons why a recruit did not report sexual assault or sexual misconduct, and perceptions of how leadership would respond to and address sexual assault or sexual misconduct. However, Air Force officials stated that it is waiting to review a pilot period of data from the survey before deciding whether to continue this effort. Further, the Air Force does not administer this survey to trainees during subsequent career-specific training. The Air Force stated that it is exploring expanding the survey to its subsequent career-specific training.
- *Navy:* The Navy developed a voluntary, anonymous survey of subsequent career-specific training students. While this survey was piloted at four training locations, Navy officials stated in July 2014 that this effort has been expanded to every subsequent career-specific training location, or A school, within the Department of the Navy. The survey is to collect data to evaluate a command's personnel policies, procedures, and programs and data resulting from the survey are provided to commanders to help them make data-driven decisions aimed at preventing sexual assaults. Questions in the survey address

unprofessional contact with instructors, perceptions of how leadership would respond to sexual assault, any experience of sexual assault or sexual misconduct, reporting of those incidences, reasons for not reporting, and rank and relationship to offender. Further, if the respondent did report the incident to authorities, questions obtain data concerning satisfaction with services received and any experience with retaliation. Navy officials stated that data from the survey can be compared against reported incidents as a means to better understand the incidence of unreported sexual assaults and climate factors that can affect reporting.

The Navy also collects information about sexual misconduct from the basic training environment. Recruits take computer-based tests at certain points during basic training, and after those tests, they are provided with voluntary critique forms that ask some questions related to sexual assault and sexual misconduct experienced or witnessed during basic training. This survey is not anonymous, as recruits must use their identification cards in order to access the computer-based system. Further, the questions do not contain the same level of detail and specificity as the survey that the Navy provides to subsequent career-specific training students. For example, the basic training survey asks respondents if they have experienced or witnessed sexual misconduct by basic training staff or recruits, whereas the survey of subsequent career-specific training students asks whether misconduct was committed by instructors, staff, and other recruits in separate, detailed response options. Further, the survey of basic training recruits does not ask questions about the outcome of reporting. While the implementation of the recruit surveys to assess instructor and staff conduct is institutionalized in a Navy instruction, the instruction does not require that the survey ask questions specifically regarding sexual assault and sexual misconduct.⁵⁷

- *Army*: The Army conducts an anonymous annual survey of soldiers who have graduated from basic or subsequent career-specific training during the past year. While numerous aspects of the training culture are addressed in the survey, there are general questions within the survey regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment during initial military training, and there are several questions regarding the sexual assault prevention and response training received during basic or

⁵⁷ Department of the Navy, Recruit Training Command, *Procedure for Administering, Routing, and Responding to Recruit Academic Test Critiques*, Recruit Training Command Instruction 1230.1B (June 21, 2011).

subsequent career-specific training. There are no questions regarding unprofessional relationships between instructors and recruits. An Army official stated that the Army plans to develop a centralized survey that would be provided to every recruit at the completion of basic training in order to obtain more detailed and current information about sexual assault and sexual misconduct that occurs specifically within basic training; however, there is not a time frame for completion as the official stated that implementation depends on funding availability.

- *Marine Corps:* Officials from the Marine Corps stated that they have taken some steps to obtain information from recruits about sexual assault and sexual misconduct, such as through leadership meeting with groups of recruits or brief feedback forms, but the information is limited because the Marine Corps does not use an anonymous and formalized survey of recruits and trainees to obtain more comprehensive and detailed information about sexual assault and misconduct that might occur during initial military training but go unreported to authorities and reasons for not reporting, and did not identify plans to do so.

Even though the services' efforts to develop surveys to obtain better information about sexual assault and sexual misconduct within initial military training were independent, we found that the data elements obtained from surveys used by the services are largely consistent across these various surveys. For example, surveys used by the Air Force at basic training and the Navy at their subsequent career-specific training ask similar questions to obtain the same type of detailed information, such as the type of misconduct recruits or trainees experienced, whether they reported the misconduct, and reasons why they did not report the misconduct. However, our analysis of these surveys shows that the Air Force basic training survey and the Navy's survey of its subsequent career-specific training students are the most comprehensive and detailed surveys used currently within the services to obtain information about sexual assault and sexual misconduct within initial military training. Table 3 illustrates some examples of the types of information obtained from each of the surveys currently used by the services to obtain more comprehensive and detailed information about sexual assault and sexual misconduct within initial military training.

Table 3: Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct Information Obtained by Military Service Initial Military Training Surveys

	Air Force basic training survey	Army annual basic and subsequent career-specific training survey	Navy basic training survey	Navy subsequent career-specific training survey
Respondent demographic data	X ^a	X		X
Unprofessional contact between instructors and recruits/trainees	X		X	X
Experienced sexual harassment	X	X	X	X ^b
Experienced sexual assault	X	X		X
Specific types of sexual assault offenses (e.g., rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy, or attempts to commit these acts)	X			X
Who committed the misconduct (identify instructor, staff, or peer)	X	X		X
Physical location/setting where incident occurred	X			X
Reporting of sexual assault or misconduct	X			X
Reasons for not reporting	X		X	X
Experienced or fear of retaliation for reporting	X		X	X
Outcome of reporting	X			
Services and support received after reporting	X			X
Perceptions of senior leadership commitment to appropriately preventing and responding to sexual harassment	X		X	
Perceptions of senior leadership commitment to appropriately preventing and responding to sexual assault	X			X

Source: GAO analysis of Air Force, Army, and Navy surveys. | GAO-14-806

Note: The Marine Corps does not conduct formalized surveys for initial military training.

^aThe Air Force basic training survey of recruits asks if respondent is male or female; no other demographic data are obtained.

^bThe Navy survey of students in subsequent career-specific training asks whether the respondent experienced sexual harassment prior to or after a sexual assault; it does not ask if the respondent experienced other sexual harassment.

Furthermore, during our meetings with recruits and with instructors during our visits, we heard about the continuous challenges in preventing and responding to sexual assault during initial military training that were common across the services. Some instructors we interviewed said that there is a perception of fear to train recruits because the instructors can be the target of false allegations from recruits resulting in severe punishment. Further, instructors said that recruits that are held back in training can be at greater risk of possibly committing sexual misconduct or becoming victims of misconduct for reasons including being taken away from their support group in their original unit or having increased amounts of unstructured time. Recruits and instructors said that efforts to prevent sexual assaults that occur between males and females during basic training, such as requiring recruits to have another recruit of the same gender with them at all times or separating males and females in different buildings, do not prevent same-sex sexual assaults. Recruits from three of the four services said they perceived that reporting sexual assault that occurred during basic training could result in an extension of their basic training in order to participate in an investigation or trial and, additionally, that they could experience retribution for reporting a sexual assault. A recruit at one service said that if she experienced an assault, she might either not report it or wait until after graduation from training to make a report. This concern was similarly raised by an independent panel's report on sexual assault in the military from June 2014, which recommended that DOD establish specific training and policies addressing retaliation toward peers who intervene or report sexual assault.⁵⁸

Without better information about sexual assault and misconduct that can occur during initial military training obtained through a survey or other tool, senior service officials may not have the quality of information needed to improve their sexual assault and other sexual misconduct prevention programs. Further, military training leadership may have difficulty in determining the appropriate policy or procedure changes or other corrective actions that could best address remaining challenges in preventing sexual assault within initial military training without more comprehensive and detailed information obtained specifically from the initial military training population, and this information can assist leadership in identifying and sharing key practices and lessons learned

⁵⁸*Report of the Response Systems to Adult Sexual Assault Crimes Panel* (June 2014).

across the services for preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual misconduct.

Conclusions

DOD has taken a number of actions to prevent, investigate, and respond to sexual assault incidents within the department. However, based on DOD data, recruits and other junior enlisted servicemembers appear to be especially vulnerable to sexual assault and related misconduct. The Air Force has been proactive in addressing how to improve the climate during basic training to prevent such incidents from occurring since the allegations became known in 2012. Air Force officials believe that their actions as a whole have improved the climate at basic training. However, until the Air Force identifies a time frame for establishing performance goals and measures to evaluate the effectiveness and improvements resulting from its actions taken, it will be unable to gauge its progress or take corrective actions when needed to address unforeseen problems that may arise or actions that are not working as intended.

Further, DOD has established a forum—CORBT—for sharing lessons learned at the services' basic training locations. CORBT provides an opportunity for all the military services to share their experiences across the services. However, until (1) CORBT's role is clarified and formalized to include lessons learned from prevention of sexual assault and other related misconduct or inappropriate behavior and (2) the council's membership is broadened to include other key stakeholders, such as the Marine Corps, in sexual assault prevention, DOD will not have a process to ensure that best practices are shared with all services and that its efforts to prevent sexual assaults during basic training are maximized department-wide. Moreover, the Commander's 2012 report noted that sexual assault and related misconduct during Air Force career-specific training should be examined separately. The Navy has more data from its survey on these incidents during career-specific training, while the Air Force has a survey tool that it hopes will provide more data on these incidents during basic training. The Army is hoping to develop a more comprehensive survey for the basic training environment, while the Marine Corps does not have such plans. However, none of the military services have detailed survey data to help provide information on both the basic and career-specific training environments or plans to leverage each other's surveys. Without more comprehensive and detailed data, including in-depth information on assaults and other improper behavior occurring at basic and subsequent career-specific military training sites—such as the relationship between the victim and perpetrator—decision makers may be challenged to best determine how to reduce sexual

assault incidents in the initial training environment. As the services have various ongoing efforts or plans to obtain such data, leveraging existing efforts could produce more effective and efficient outcomes.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making five recommendations to the Secretary of Defense to ensure that efforts under way within the services are achieving the desired goals of better preventing, investigating, and responding to sexual assault and to leverage existing resources to assist in that effort.

In order to help ensure that the actions taken by the Air Force are better preventing, investigating, and responding to sexual assaults incidents during basic training, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Air Force to establish an oversight framework to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the recommendations in the Commander's report. This would include

- identifying time frames for completion of its efforts to develop and implement performance goals and measures for evaluating the progress made as a result of implementing its actions and
- adding the results, or preliminary results, of that evaluation in the department's next annual report to Congress on sexual assault.

As CORBT is currently used by most of the military services as the forum for sharing lessons learned across the services regarding better prevention, investigation, and response to sexual assault within basic training, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the military services, in collaboration with the Director of DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, to clarify the CORBT charter to

- define and finalize in policy its role as the mechanism for collaborating and sharing lessons learned for better preventing, investigating, and responding to sexual assault and misconduct during initial military training—both basic and subsequent career-specific training—and
- identify and include key stakeholders who should participate in the forum, such as officials from DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, representatives from the U.S. Marine Corps, and officials responsible for addressing sexual harassment and other forms of misconduct.

In order for the military services to obtain more comprehensive and detailed information regarding sexual assault prevention and response

during basic and subsequent career-specific training to help oversee their programs, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct each military service, in collaboration with the Director of DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, to develop and implement a tool, such as a survey, or leverage existing military training surveys—such as those used by the Air Force or the Navy—that will provide more comprehensive and detailed information to decision makers about sexual assault and other sexual misconduct that occur during initial military training, including basic and subsequent career-specific military training.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to DOD for review and comment. In written comments, DOD concurred with four of the five recommendations and partially concurred with the fifth recommendation. DOD's comments are summarized below and reprinted in appendix V. DOD also provided technical comments on the draft report, which we incorporated as appropriate.

DOD concurred with the first two recommendations that the Air Force establish an oversight framework to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken in response to recommendations in the Commander's Report. This would include (1) identifying time frames for completion of its efforts to develop and implement performance goals and measures for evaluating the progress made as a result of implementing its actions and (2) adding the results, or preliminary results, of that evaluation in the department's next annual report to Congress on sexual assault. In commenting on the draft report, DOD stated that the Air Force continually evaluates implementation actions on a monthly basis using its Recruiting, Education, and Training Oversight Council. We acknowledged in this report that the Air Force took steps towards developing an oversight framework by establishing the council, comprised of senior leadership and key stakeholders from across the Air Force's recruiting and training environments, to oversee improvement efforts. Further, we reported that the Air Force had developed data sources and that it uses those data sources to track the implementation of the recommendations from the Commander's report. DOD also stated in its comments that the Air Force provided metrics to us, and that it continues to refine performance goals and measures utilizing baseline data from the RAND trainee survey that as of fiscal year 2015 will include 1 year of data collection. We stated in the report that the Air Force tracks the number of allegations of sexual assault or misconduct and also tracks other information regarding the status of its implementation of the recommendations from the Commander's report. However, as noted in the report, we found that the

Air Force has not established performance goals and performance measures that would evaluate the effectiveness, or impact, resulting from the actions it has taken in response to the recommendations in the Commander's report, or in response to other initiatives the Air Force may have underway, such as those in the technical training or flying training environments. Specifically, while the Air Force has effectively tracked the implementation of the recommendations, without evaluating the impact of its actions through the use of performance goals and measures, it may not know whether it needs to sustain the efforts it has implemented or undertake different corrective actions. Lastly, DOD stated in its comments that the Air Education and Training Command's efforts remain focused on ensuring a climate of dignity and respect and transforming a culture, which GAO acknowledges, can take 5 to 7 years to achieve. We reiterate that large organizational changes can take 5 to 7 years to implement. As a result, having a fully developed oversight framework to gauge progress and provide consistent focus is critical to successful transformation. As the Air Force has taken some steps towards developing an oversight framework, we believe that identification of timeframes for completion of its efforts to develop and implement performance goals and measures is an important next step, as is reporting on its efforts to internal and external stakeholders such as Congress.

DOD concurred with the two recommendations aimed at improving the council used by most of the military services as the forum for sharing lessons learned across the services regarding better prevention, investigation, and response to sexual assault within basic training, including to clarify the charter to define and finalize in policy the role of the council in both basic and subsequent career-specific training and to identify and include key stakeholders who should participate in the forum.

DOD partially concurred with the fifth recommendation that the military services develop and implement a survey, or leverage existing military training surveys, which will provide more comprehensive and detailed information to decision makers about sexual assault and other sexual misconduct that occurs during initial military training, including basic and subsequent career-specific military training. In its written comments, DOD stated that the department values the intent of this recommendation; but stated that more analysis needs to be conducted to determine the best tool or methodology to meet the intent of this recommendation and reduce the negative impact of possible survey fatigue. DOD stated that it conducted focus groups in the summer of 2014 at training locations. Questions covered topics such as general awareness of services available as well as reporting options, opinions on the efficiency and

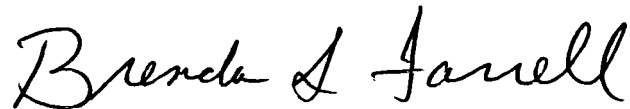
applicability of training, changes in policy, perceptions of command climate and military culture regarding sexual assault, and bystander intervention approaches. DOD did not describe in its written comments the comprehensiveness and detail of information obtained or the methodology of those focus groups, such as if the focus groups were conducted at both basic and subsequent career-specific training environments, how trainees were selected for participation, or whether the focus groups addressed the range of sexual misconduct aside from sexual assault, such as sexual harassment or inappropriate relationships. However, DOD noted that all four of the military services participated in the effort. DOD also did not discuss in its comments any plans for future efforts to obtain more comprehensive and detailed information about sexual assault and other sexual misconduct from the initial military training environment. Further, DOD did not discuss plans for conducting more analysis to determine the best tool or methodology to use to obtain more detailed and comprehensive data and information about sexual assault and other sexual misconduct that occurs during initial military training.

As noted in the report, we heard in our discussion with recruits at various services that there are reasons why they may not report sexual assault or other misconduct during training, such as a fear of being held back in training or fear of reprisal. Therefore, we continue to believe that there are benefits to obtaining more comprehensive and detailed information about the range of sexual assault and other misconduct that can be committed by either instructors or fellow recruits or trainees, such as through an anonymous tool such as surveys conducted by the Air Force at its basic training and the Navy at its subsequent career-specific training. We recommended that the military services develop a survey, or leverage existing surveys, in order to provide options for DOD and allow the department to determine what tool or tools would best obtain information in an anonymous manner that is more comprehensive and detailed. We also reported that initial military training is comprised of young men and women of junior enlisted ranks, that DOD has some data to suggest that initial military training is an important area of concern for DOD related to sexual assault, and that sexual assault is an underreported crime. We believe that an anonymous tool such as a survey would provide decision makers more comprehensive and detailed information on sexual assaults and misconduct across initial military training important for sharing lessons learned and for leaders to determine appropriate policy and procedural changes to further prevent sexual assault and other sexual misconduct. Therefore, we have clarified our recommendation to emphasize the importance of collecting more comprehensive and detailed

data through an anonymous tool that could be a survey or some other means that DOD identifies through analysis.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and appropriate congressional committees. In addition, this report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staffs have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda S. Farrell". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Brenda S. Farrell
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To examine the extent to which the Air Force implemented the recommendations in the Commander's report, we reviewed the Commander's 2012 report and related Air Force documents, including policy memorandums, staffing reports, regulations, and briefings. We also conducted interviews with command leadership, senior officials, and military training instructors at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and Randolph Air Force Bases¹ to discuss actions taken by the Air Force to implement the recommendations. While at Lackland Air Force Base, we also noted physical changes that had been made in response to the recommendations in the Commander's report. Upon our request, the Air Force provided its analysis of whether the implementation of each recommendation from the Commander's report was complete. However, based on our review of the Air Force analysis, in some instances we disagreed with the Air Force's designation of completeness of implementation for some recommendations. We independently assessed the completeness of implementation for each of the 46 recommendations from the Commander's report.

To determine our designation of completeness of implementation, we used content analysis to compare the documents and statements of officials detailing actions taken by the Air Force to the findings and recommendations outlined in the Commander's report. To perform this analysis, we developed a data collection instrument that listed the finding and resulting recommendation for each of the 46 recommendations from the Commander's report and detailed any actions taken by the Air Force to address each recommendation, as well as the pertinent support from Air Force-provided policies, other guidance, or other documents, such as staffing information. If a recommendation related to physical changes in the training environment, we detailed the results of our inspection performed while on our visit, including photographic evidence. An analyst categorized each of the recommendations as one of the following: (1) "implemented" if our analysis showed that the actions taken by the Air Force in response to the recommendations fully address the findings made in the Commander's report and fully institutionalized those actions into Air Force policies and procedures, (2) "partially implemented" if our analysis showed that additional actions are needed to fully address the finding and resulting recommendation in the Commander's report or if

¹Lackland Air Force Base is the only enlisted basic military training facility within the Air Force, and Randolph Air Force Base is the headquarters of the Air Education and Training Command.

further steps are needed to ensure the changes are fully institutionalized in Air Force policies and procedures, or (3) “not implemented” if the Air Force did not take identifiable steps to address the recommendation.² A second analyst independently reviewed the same information and recorded the assessment and the basis for the assessment. The two analysts created a final assessment that reconciled their two independent assessments and reflects the analysts’ consensus.

To examine the extent to which the Air Force evaluated the effectiveness of the actions taken in response to the recommendations from the Commander’s report, we reviewed documents and interviewed Air Force officials regarding its efforts to measure the impact of corrective actions it has taken. For example, we reviewed the charter of the oversight body created by the Air Force to oversee these efforts and reviewed documents detailing any goals for implementation, such as interim status updates produced by the Air Force and the Air Force portion of the Department of Defense’s (DOD) annual report on sexual assault in the military. We compared its efforts against key practices for organizations undergoing change or transformation, such as involving senior leadership and developing a framework for oversight, including establishing performance goals and measures that would enable it to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions to better prevent and respond to sexual assault and misconduct.³ Further, we reviewed our body of work on effective performance measurement and reviewed the Air Force’s efforts,

²For the purposes of this report, we define institutionalized changes as those that have a clear method for being sustained beyond leadership changes, such as through formalized policy and procedural changes. Our prior work found that organizational change and transformation can take 5 to 7 years. An organizational change such as addressing weaknesses within the Air Force’s basic training to better prevent sexual assault may take several years to complete. Institutionalizing changes in policy or procedures may be necessary to sustain those changes beyond leadership turnover, which occurs frequently within the military, such as every 2 years in many positions. See GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, [GAO-03-669](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003). We did not assess whether these recommendations should be implemented, but assessed if the Air Force took actions that addressed the findings and resulting recommendations from the Commander’s report.

³In 2002, we convened a forum of public and private sector senior leaders and academics to identify useful practices and lessons learned from organizational change and transformations, and we subsequently reported the key practices that were consistently identified from successful organizational changes and transformations. These key practices can be modified to fit the circumstances and conditions that are relevant to a particular agency as it transforms its culture to be more results oriented. See [GAO-03-669](#) for the key practices for organizational transformations.

if any, to provide oversight and use of performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its sexual assault and sexual misconduct prevention efforts in the basic training environment.⁴

To examine the extent to which the military services share lessons learned and have the data to oversee their efforts to prevent sexual assault and misconduct during initial military training, we reviewed the services' efforts to collaborate and share lessons learned and compared these efforts to best practices for effective collaboration.⁵ Further, we reviewed the policies and procedures in place within each service that are intended to prevent sexual assaults during initial military training that could be considered key practices or lessons learned and discussed with service officials any assessment of the impact of these efforts. In addition to Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, we visited three basic training locations to review policies and procedures in place, or in development, to better prevent sexual assault and misconduct. We visited the Army's Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois; and Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina,⁶ in order to interview command leadership, sexual assault

⁴We have a body of work that discusses the need for effective performance measurement and details the key attributes of successful performance measures. A seminal report defines the key attributes of successful performance measures that apply to any government program: GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Further Refine Its Tax Filing Season Performance Measures*, [GAO-03-143](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 22, 2002). Other examples of applying performance measure attributes can be found in the following reports: GAO, *Missile Defense: Opportunity to Refocus on Strengthening Acquisition Management*, [GAO-13-432](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2013); *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships*, [GAO-11-646SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2011); and *Defense Health Care Reform: Additional Implementation Details Would Increase Transparency of DOD's Plans and Enhance Accountability*, [GAO-14-49](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 6, 2013).

⁵In 2005, we conducted work to identify criteria that can be used to assess collaboration between federal agencies. We identified eight key practices that can help federal agencies enhance and sustain their collaborative efforts. See GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

⁶We visited Lackland Air Force Base and Naval Station Great Lakes as these locations are the only enlisted basic training locations in the Air Force and Navy, respectively. We selected Fort Jackson because it is the largest of the four enlisted Army basic training locations and one of the locations that trains both female and male Army recruits. The Marine Corps has two enlisted basic training locations, and we selected Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island because it is the only location that trains both female and male Marine Corps recruits.

response coordinators, victim advocates, chaplains, judge advocates, and officials from military criminal investigative organizations. We also held meetings with basic training instructors and recruits to understand from their perspectives how policies and procedures are implemented and any remaining challenges in preventing sexual assault during basic training.⁷

We identified sources the department uses to track or monitor sexual assaults or obtain information about sexual misconduct through DOD's comprehensive instruction on preventing sexual assault and interviews with DOD officials. We reviewed DOD sources of data, such as annual strategic plans, as well as DOD's sexual assault prevention and response directives and instructions that identify roles and responsibilities regarding performance measurement for the department's sexual assault prevention and response program. We interviewed military service officials about service-specific efforts to obtain more comprehensive and detailed information about sexual assault and sexual misconduct that occur during initial military training, and obtained service documents related to those efforts, such as surveys. We obtained any survey instruments used by the military services to obtain information from their basic training populations, subsequent career-specific training populations, or both about sexual assault or other sexual misconduct, especially regarding misconduct that goes unreported to authorities. As we identified that there were several ongoing efforts in place among the services to survey these populations, we identified similarities in the questions asked and types of information obtained. We compared service efforts to obtain this information to our prior work on collaboration and

⁷An installation will often have numerous individuals who serve as victim advocates or military training instructors; therefore, for interviews with such officials we relied on command leadership to identify officials for our interviews, which may result in limitations since we did not meet with all individuals performing these functions. For our interviews with Army, Marine Corps, and Navy recruits, we asked command leadership to randomly select groups of 10 to 15 male recruits and 10 to 15 female recruits, and we met with male and female groups separately. Command leadership in various locations used different methods to select recruits, including selecting recruits based on last digits of Social Security numbers and asking for volunteers for an unknown task or duty. While the results of these interviews are not generalizable, they provided perspectives on basic training. At Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base, we met with a group of 8 recruits that included both male and female recruits who volunteered for an unknown task or duty.

reducing fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.⁸ Unless otherwise noted, we assessed the reliability of any data used in the development of this report by reviewing related documentation and interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data.

We interviewed officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the military services on the methods they use to track sexual assaults or obtain information about sexual misconduct, including a department-wide database that became operational during this review and department-wide or service-specific surveys and our prior related work reviewing DOD's sexual assault program in which we made recommendations related to a comprehensive oversight framework for DOD's program.⁹ We obtained data resulting from the DOD's Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members, which is publicly available as part of DOD's *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military*, in order to review the percentages of servicemembers who reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact during either basic or subsequent career-specific training. We obtained the ages and enlisted ranks of victims and offenders of sexual assault from unrestricted investigations identified in DOD's annual reports from fiscal years 2012 and 2013. As the annual reports satisfy a congressionally required mandate to provide statistics and updates to Congress regarding sexual assault in the military, we did not independently assess the reliability of these data and the data did not materially affect our findings, conclusions, or recommendations. We requested additional data from the DOD's Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members from the Defense Manpower Data Center, such as more detailed data from those survey respondents who stated that they experienced unwanted sexual contact during basic or career-specific training, such as whether they reported the assault to

⁸GAO-06-15 details criteria that can be used to help enhance and sustain collaboration between federal agencies. GAO, *2014 Annual Report: Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, GAO-14-343SP (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 8, 2014), identifies government programs that exhibit ineffective or inefficient outcomes or results because of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication and suggests strategies agencies can pursue to improve effectiveness and increase efficiencies.

⁹GAO, *Military Personnel: DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs Face Implementation and Oversight Challenges*, GAO-08-924 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 29, 2008), and *Military Personnel: Additional Actions Are Needed to Strengthen DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs*, GAO-10-215 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2010).

authorities, the location of the training, and if the offender was a supervisor. However, Defense Manpower Data Center officials responded that lower levels of data as requested were not reportable because of a small sample size of respondents. Therefore, we excluded these data from this report. However, we assessed the reliability of the high-level data presented in DOD's annual report on sexual assault in the military that includes data from this survey, and we determined that high-level data elements were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report, such as a discussion of the percentage of active duty servicemembers who report that they experienced unwanted sexual contact during initial military training.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2013 to September 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Air Force Reviews of Sexual Assault and Misconduct during Initial Military Training

In response to the allegations of sexual assault and other sexual misconduct committed by Air Force military basic training instructors, the Air Force carried out three reviews in order to uncover any weaknesses in the initial military training environment and factors that contributed to the delay in reporting of sexual assault allegations at Lackland Air Force Base.

- **The Commander's 2012 report.** As part of the process to develop the Commander's report, a team, led by a major general in the Air Force, interviewed different levels of command leadership, military training instructors and the supervisors of instructors, and faculty and students at technical training schools. Further, the team conducted focus groups with recruits at basic training and military training instructors and their spouses and provided anonymous questionnaires to over 6,000 recruits at basic training and to over 400 military training instructors. In total, the team surveyed 18,000 recruits, military training instructors, technical training instructors, and technical training students. Air Force officials stated that they did not interview identified victims involved with the ongoing investigations of military training instructor misconduct because they were concerned the victims may have felt revictimized by the additional questions. However, the team reviewed law enforcement investigative materials, including interview records and reports associated with individual cases, including victim interviews, collected by the two investigative offices in the Air Force with responsibilities for investigating sexual assault and other sexual misconduct—the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) and Security Forces Operations, Investigations (SFOI). AFOSI investigates allegations of sexual assault and unprofessional relationships involving sexual contact with an authority figure. SFOI investigates unprofessional relationships involving an authority figure without sexual contact. The team also interviewed leadership from basic training facilities of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The resulting report focuses on preventing, investigating, and responding to sexual assault during basic training; it does not make recommendations regarding the resolution of sexual assault allegations.
- **Technical training review.** In April 2013, the Commander of the 2nd Air Force directed a working group to review student-on-student sexual assaults in technical training that followed the methodology of the Commander's report. The findings and recommendations of the Commander's 2012 report focus primarily on the basic military training environment, stating that only a limited review of technical training was possible and that the report would not provide a fully developed

set of recommendations regarding technical training. The Commander's 2012 report suggested a follow-on review of the technical training environment, and as part of the review, the Air Force led 18 focus groups consisting of students, instructors, and senior leadership of various ranks across three technical training locations to discuss sexual assault and other sexual misconduct. The working group also conducted a review of 27 past cases of alleged sexual assault from January 2010 through December 2012 to determine factors that contributed to sexual assault. The report presents findings related to weaknesses in areas such as leadership, culture, training, and perceived barriers to reporting sexual assaults, and it contained 24 recommendations to address these weaknesses and proposed five areas for further review to determine an appropriate organizational response.

- **Law enforcement review of organization response to misconduct.** The Commander of the 2nd Air Force directed an investigating officer within the Air Force to conduct a law enforcement investigation into all aspects of the facts and circumstances concerning the organizational response to military training instructor misconduct within basic training. The review was conducted from July through August 2012.

Appendix III: Recommendations Either Not Implemented or Partially Implemented from the Air Education and Training Command Commander's Report, Air Force Designation, and GAO Analysis of Implementation

Recommendation	Air Force designation	GAO analysis of implementation
1. Eliminate weaknesses in existing detection measures by improving surveillance and entry control procedures.	Partially implemented. Air Force officials told us that upgrading security surveillance and monitoring equipment required a \$2 million investment, and as of July 2014, the video camera systems attained full operational capability in three of its facilities, although additional work will be conducted in fiscal year 2015 to expand this system to other basic training facilities. The upgraded equipment is to provide improved security with better fidelity and longer storage periods of video monitoring. Air Force officials designated this recommendation as partially completed as many steps have been taken to address security measures with the exception of the completion of equipment upgrades	Partially implemented. We agree with this assessment. During our visit in November 2013, we observed partial completion of other actions related to this recommendation; for example, doors to utility closets had not all been removed and military training instructors' offices did not all have windows. Air Force officials stated that most of these changes were completed prior to trainees' occupying those spaces; however, completion of all new construction of recruit housing will continue through 2021.
2. Increase staffing of military training instructors to fill all 528 authorized positions.	Partially implemented. The Air Force provided us with information on its overall staffing capabilities per unit, and officials told us that this recommendation will be phased in over time and will be completed by June 2015. Air Force officials designated this recommendation as partially completed because staffing adjustments are under way	Partially implemented. We agree with this assessment.
3. Shorten the instructors' tour length to a maximum of 3 years and do not allow them follow-on special duty assignments	Partially implemented. Air Force officials told us that this recommendation will be phased in over time and will be completed by June 2015. Air Force officials designated this recommendation as partially completed because staffing adjustments are under way.	Partially implemented. We agree with this assessment.
4. Shorten the duration of basic military training from 8.5 weeks to 7.5 weeks to eliminate "white space."	Partially implemented. In July 2014, Air Force officials told us that the overall training length requirements have remained the same, although they plan to restructure and condense the training into 7.5 weeks to eliminate "white space," and the last week will focus on core values of the Air Force.	Partially implemented. As Air Force officials stated that they plan to begin implementation of this change in 2015, we determined this recommendation to be partially implemented.
5. Ensure that candidates across all career fields are considered for the command of training squadrons.	Implemented. The Commander's report found that some career fields did not release high-quality candidates to basic training command positions, limiting the pool of highly qualified commander candidates. As a result of the recommendation, the Air Force requested selections for officers to serve as basic training commanders for 2013 and 2015 rotations from a pool that consisted of all career fields. The Air Force was granted its request for both 2013 and 2015, and therefore the Air Force designates this recommendation as completed.	Partially implemented. Air Force officials do not know whether the basic training command will be given this priority of choice in commander selections after 2015. Because the Air Force has not formalized this policy in guidance, we are designating this recommendation as partially completed.

Appendix III: Recommendations Either Not Implemented or Partially Implemented from the Air Education and Training Command Commander's Report, Air Force Designation, and GAO Analysis of Implementation

<p>6. Ensure that training on how to report military training instructor misconduct reassures trainees that there will be no negative consequences for them if they allege sexual assault or other unacceptable behavior.</p>	<p>Implemented. The Commander's report found that some trainees were afraid of punishment if they reported sexual assault or other unacceptable behavior because they were warned in both orientation briefings and on Trainee Comment Sheets that false statements would be punished. Further, criminal investigations found that some trainees were told by their military training instructors that they would be negatively affected, such as discharged from the Air Force, if they reported a sexual assault or other unacceptable behavior. In response to this recommendation, the Air Force removed this warning regarding providing false statements from the Trainee Comment Sheet and now mentions in the group commander's orientation briefing that trainees will not be punished for reporting allegations. It therefore considers this recommendation to be completed.</p>	<p>Partially implemented. A video message from senior Air Force leadership presented to trainees during orientation repeatedly states that false accusations will be punished. As a result, trainees may continue to have concerns about being punished or negatively affected for reporting sexual assaults, and thus we designated this recommendation as partially completed. Further, in survey data provided by the Air Force for October 2013 through January 2014, of the trainees that reported witnessing or experiencing maltreatment, maltraining, or unprofessional relationships involving military training instructors, a majority of trainees claimed they did not report the misconduct for various reasons.</p>
<p>7. Develop and institutionalize a more effective incentive program for military training instructor duty.</p>	<p>Implemented. The Air Force took no action, stating that the recommendation was completed, as military training instructors already receive the Air Force's top rate of incentive pay for their duties. The Air Force provided documentation stating that military training instructors have received the same level of special duty pay since 1985.</p>	<p>Not implemented. As the Air Force made no identifiable change as a result of this recommendation, we determined this recommendation to be not implemented at this time. For example, the Commander's report suggested that the Air Force consider incentives toward promotion similar to those at the Army and Navy; however, the Air Force did not explain its rationale for not implementing this action.</p>

Sources: GAO analysis and Air Force analysis of actions taken by the Air Force in response to recommendations. | GAO-14-806

Appendix IV: Potential Data Sources Identified by the Air Force:

Air Force officials identified six potential data sources that they stated contain key information for tracking the status of the implementation of recommendations from the Commander's report.

- *Trainee Abuse and Misconduct Survey:* Air Force officials stated that this data source will help them evaluate the extent of sexual assault and other misconduct in basic military training. The Air Force stated that it fully implemented this survey on October 28, 2013, after it pretested questions in a pilot survey. The survey asks trainees if they experienced, witnessed, or heard about sexual assault or other misconduct from their military training instructors or other trainees, addressing topics such as sexual harassment, unprofessional relationships, and sexual assault. Additionally, the survey asks respondents about their comfort in reporting allegations of sexual assault or misconduct, their familiarity with different sexual assault resources, as well as why they would or would not report a sexual assault or other misconduct; however, Air Force officials stated that they will wait for 1 year of data to be collected to determine whether it can be applied to other environments, such as the technical training environment. Further, despite Air Force officials stating that this survey would be important for assessing the impact of their actions, one senior command official expressed concerns over the reliability of survey information after receiving initial data from the survey and stated that he questioned whether recruits were being truthful in their responses.
- *Military Training Instructor Survey:* The Air Force identified this survey as a tool to understand instructors' perceptions of the culture and the basic military training environment. While the Air Force has developed questions for this survey, the Air Force stated that it has not yet implemented the survey. An Air Force instruction stated that the Air Force plans to distribute the survey among military training instructors twice a year to gather feedback on work experiences as well as misconduct in the basic military training environment, but the instruction does not identify a timeline for the initial implementations of this survey. An early version of the survey that the Air Force provided to us asks military training instructors about job stressors, perceptions of promotion opportunities, as well as their comfort in understanding how to interpret sexual assault and misconduct policies.
- *Quarterly Reports by the Standardization and Evaluation Team:* Air Force officials stated that a team performs random inspections on a weekly basis to check compliance with specific policies, including some actions related to specific recommendations, such as ensuring that trainees will not separate from other trainees who are assigned to

accompany them at all times. The Standardization and Evaluation team aggregates findings into a report and distributes the report to the commander of basic military training and other leadership every quarter.

- *Analysis of Staffing Information:* Air Force officials reported that they use data on the quality of instructor staffing by categories such as rank, experience, and performance ratings to track the status of recommendations, along with staffing numbers for instructors and leadership staff. The Air Force states that it plans to use these data sources to track some recommendations to help ensure that certain changes in leadership and staffing are continued, such as increases in staffing for military training instructors and security forces.
- *Training Group Quarterly Survey Report:* This report aggregates data from end-of-course surveys, random and targeted group surveys, and trainee comment sheets into a report that is distributed to command leadership every quarter. The report outlines feedback received from trainees throughout basic military training on topics such as the overall quality of their training, professionalism and quality of instructor staff, and general perceptions of support received while in the program. Specifically, the survey report contains response data on trainees' level of satisfaction with sexual assault prevention and response courses, and perceived ability to report misconduct, as well as if trainees experienced, witnessed, or heard about sexual assault or other misconduct during basic military training.
- *Military Training Instructor Discipline Spreadsheet:* In response to the Commander's report recommendations to develop and utilize a tracking tool for military training instructor misconduct, the Air Force developed a spreadsheet that officials said they use to track misconduct, disciplinary actions, and administrative actions for military training instructors. The spreadsheet is composed of fields that allow Air Force officials to input information related to alleged offenses, actions taken to address misconduct, parties involved, and other pertinent factors.

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Defense



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

Brenda S. Farrell
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Farrell:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report, (GAO-14-806), "Military Personnel: DoD Needs to Take Further Actions to Prevent Sexual Assault During Initial Military Training" dated August 11, 2014 (GAO 351840).

The Department agrees with the intent of the recommendations and appreciates the GAO's interest in our efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assault in the military training environment. We will work with the Services to implement the recommendations and note in several instances the work has already begun. The enclosure provides comments concerning the recommendations. We have provided suggested technical comments and corrections to your staff which we feel should be included in the final version.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report. My point of contact for is Major General Jeffrey J. Snow, Director, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. He may be reached at (571) 372-2643.

Sincerely,


Jessica L. Wright

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
Department of Defense Inspector General

GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED AUGUST 11, 2014
GAO-14-806 (GAO CODE 351840)

“Military Personnel: DoD Needs to Take Further Action to Prevent
Sexual Assault During Initial Military Training”

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Air Force to establish an oversight framework to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the recommendations in the Commander’s Report. This would include the identification of timeframes for completion of its efforts to develop and implement performance goals and measure for evaluating the progress made as a result of implementing its actions.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. This effort began on January 5, 2013 when the Air Force Air Education and Training Command (AETC/CC) established the Recruiting, Education, and Training Oversight Council (RETOC). The AETC/CC directed the establishment of an oversight council to “review the progress and effectiveness of previously implemented actions, provide an expanded perspective on future actions, and advise the commander on strategic issues affecting Airmen safety, good order, and discipline within the recruiting, education, and training environments.” (RETOC Charter) Currently, the AETC/CC assesses the implementation status and effectiveness of 46 commander directed investigation recommendations and thirteen parallel initiatives related to Basic Military Training. Additionally, the AETC/CC assesses thirteen recruiting initiatives and an additional ten Technical Training initiatives. Recently, the RETOC expanded into the Flying Training and Education environments to identify potential initiatives for these environments. AETC provided these metrics to the GAO and continues to refine performance goals and measures utilizing baseline data from the RAND Trainee Survey. FY15 will represent one year of this survey’s data collection. AETC’s efforts remain focused on ensuring a climate of dignity and respect and transforming a culture, which GAO acknowledges, can take five to seven years to achieve. (GAO Footnote 14, Page 5)

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Air Force to establish an oversight framework to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the recommendations in the Commander’s Report. This would include adding the results, or preliminary results, of that evaluation in the department’s next annual report on sexual assault to Congress.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. As stated in the response to Recommendation 1, the AETC/CC continually evaluates implementation actions on a monthly basis via the RETOC.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the military services, in collaboration with the Director of DoD’s Sexual Assault Prevention and

Response Office, clarify the CORBT charter to define and finalize in policy its role as the mechanism for collaborating and sharing lessons learned for better preventing, investigating, and responding to sexual assault and misconduct during initial military training - both basic and subsequent career-specific training.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the military services, in collaboration with the Director of DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, clarify the CORBT charter to identify and include key stakeholders who should participate in the forum, such as DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, representative from the U.S. Marine Corps, and officials responsible for addressing sexual harassment and other forms of misconduct.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the military services, in collaboration with the Director of DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, develop and implement a survey, or leverage existing military training surveys such as those used by the Air Force or the Navy, that will provide more comprehensive and detailed information to decision makers about sexual assault and other sexual misconduct that occurs during initial military training, including basic and subsequent career-specific military training.

DoD RESPONSE: Partially concur. Overall, the Department values the intent of this recommendation; however more analysis needs to be conducted to determine the best tool or methodology to meet the intent of this recommendation and reduce the negative impact of possible survey fatigue. The Department conducted focus groups in the summer of 2014 that specifically aimed to solicit feedback from trainees at training installations. All four of the military services and the National Guard Bureau participated in the focus group effort. Questions covered topics ranging from general awareness of services available as well as reporting options, opinions on the efficiency and applicability of training, changes in policy, perceptions of command climate and military culture regarding sexual assault, and bystander intervention approaches. Participants were also asked to share any ideas or recommendations on how to improve prevention and response efforts. Results of this effort will be published in the Department's next annual report on sexual assault to Congress.

Appendix VI: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Brenda S. Farrell, (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Lori Atkinson (Assistant Director), James Ashley, Tracy Barnes, Margaret Best, Scott Bruckner, Grace Coleman, Suzanne M. Perkins, Beverly Schladt, Leigh Ann Sennette, and Michael Silver made key contributions to this report.

Related GAO Products

Military Personnel: DOD Has Taken Steps to Meet the Health Needs of Deployed Servicewomen, but Actions Are Needed to Enhance Care for Sexual Assault Victims. [GAO-13-182](#). Washington, D.C.: January 29, 2013.

Preventing Sexual Harassment: DOD Needs Greater Leadership Commitment and an Oversight Framework. [GAO-11-809](#). Washington, D.C.: September 21, 2011.

Military Justice: Oversight and Better Collaboration Needed for Sexual Assault Investigations and Adjudications. [GAO-11-579](#). Washington, D.C.: June 22, 2011.

Military Personnel: DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs Need to Be Further Strengthened. [GAO-10-405T](#). Washington, D.C.: February 24, 2010.

Military Personnel: Additional Actions Are Needed to Strengthen DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs. [GAO-10-215](#). Washington, D.C.: February 3, 2010.

Military Personnel: DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs Face Implementation and Oversight Challenges. [GAO-08-924](#). Washington, D.C.: August 29, 2008.

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